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Forster and his kind – Christopher Isherwood and the 30's Group

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To Luís Madeira,
my lifelong companion.

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I am grateful to my masters, those living, and those who left work of the most inspiring quality and from whom I have learnt.

I thank my friends and family, and each and every one who, one way or another, helped me to accomplish this work. I am sorry for having kept my friends in abeyance for so long a period…

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At last, I am grateful to my deceased parents who taught me respect and sense of justice.

Abstract

Having as a starting point a Materialist outset, this research work is intended to be an interdisciplinary attempt to study the literary production as well as the life trajectories of E.M. Forster, Christopher Isherwood and other writers of the Thirties' – the so-called 'The Thirties' Generation' - with the precise goal to find a connecting thread between the older writer, born in 1879, under the rule of Queen Victoria, and these writers who started developing their writing activity in the late 20's and 30's. They were too young to participate in the First World War, but old enough to partake in the Second.

Our endeavour aims at bringing to light the social, economic and political impact the successive wars (not only the two World Wars but also the Spanish Civil War) as well as the consecutive convulsions that took place in the first half of last century had on the works of these writers, both E. M. Forster and the writers of the Thirties' Generation. Moreover, it is our aim to expound how they made use of and dealt with the current predicament and the subsequent changes of the political systems in Europe (in so far as it helped) in their artistic production.

This study thus deals with the role of the intellectuals, the writers and the artists and to what extent, especially in a period of crisis, their art should be autonomous or, on the reverse, should mingle with politics in the sense of helping in the changing process of life in society. It further seeks to provide an explanation for the development of the various phases of these authors' writing careers, the shifts in their interests, often dictated by the historical moment they were going through, by exploring the intricate interrelationships between the historical events of their time and their literary evolution. It will also try to trace E. M. Forster's influence on the work of the younger writers (namely Christopher Isherwood), and the importance of the latter's militant work on the various privileged grounds of their choice, be they political, of gender or religious.

Keywords

Materialism, Cultural Materialism, New Historicism, E. M. Forster, the Thirties' Generation, intellectuals, literary production, Fascism, Nazism, War, political militancy.

Resumo

Tendo como ponto de partida uma perspectiva Materialista, este trabalho de pesquisa pretende ser uma tentativa interdisciplinar de estudar a produção literária bem como as trajectórias de vida de E. M. Forster, Christopher Isherwood e outros escritores ingleses da década de trinta do século XX, a chamada Geração de Trinta. Ele tem como objectivo encontrar um fio condutor entre as obras de E. M. Forster, nascido em 1879, ainda no reinado da Rainha Victoria, e estes escritores, mais jovens, que começaram a desenvolver as suas respectivas carreiras literárias nas décadas de 1920 – 1930 e que eram demasiado jovens para participar na Primeira Guerra Mundial, mas com idade suficiente para tomar parte na Segunda.

Os nossos esforços têm, ainda, a ambição de trazer a lume, a importância e o impacto social, económico e político que as sucessivas guerras (não apenas as duas Guerras Mundiais mas também a Guerra Civil de Espanha) e também as inúmeras convulsões sociais, que ocorreram na primeira metade do século passado, tiveram nas obras destes escritores, tanto E. M. Forster como os escritores da "Geração de Trinta", e como eles lidaram e fizeram uso, na sua produção artística, dos acontecimentos históricos e das subsequentes mudanças de sistemas políticos na Europa.

Este estudo trata, portanto, do papel dos intelectuais, dos escritores e dos artistas e até que ponto, especialmente em períodos de crise, a sua arte deve ser autónoma ou se, pelo contrário, ela deve interferir nas questões e decisões políticas no sentido de trazer um contributo que possa favorecer o processo de mudança da vida em sociedade. Com a sua realização pretendeu-se encontrar uma explicação, que julgámos plausível, para o desenvolvimento das várias fases das carreiras literárias destes autores, das mudanças dos seus interesses, muitas vezes ditados pelo momento histórico que atravessavam, explorando as intrincadas inter-relações entre os acontecimentos históricos do seu tempo, as relações de poder no terreno e a sua própria evolução literária. Traçar a influência de E. M. Forster nos jovens escritores (nomeadamente Christopher Isherwood), tanto na sua conduta literária como na sua conduta como cidadãos, e a importância do trabalho militante destes últimos nos vários campos da sua escolha, quer seja político, de género ou religioso foi também nossa preocupação no estudo agora apresentado.

Palavras-chave

Materialismo, Materialismo Cultural, "New Historicism", E. M. Forster, a Geração de Trinta, intelectuais, produção literária, Fascismo, Nazismo, Guerra, militância política.

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Preliminary considerations or how it all started!

When some thirty years ago, I was travelling in the then German Democratic Republic, what was to be a long trip of at least six hours that would take me from the Baltic shoreline city of Rostock to Dresden, on one of those old trains which I have seen only there, abruptly, the machine came to a halt, and between drizzle and snow I could hardly read the name of the station. But suddenly it came to my mind that I had seen that name somewhere before, and, wrecking my brains to try and find out where that might have been, I mentally repeated the name of the station 'Nassenheide'. Yes, '*Nassenheide*' (Forster,2008), that was it! "*Arrival at Nassenheide*"! (Forster, s.d. [manuscript])[1] (see annexe 1 for the original text), a short text written by Forster, which minutely reported his arrival at one of the most remote corners of Germany, the house of Countess von Arnim – "who wrote under the name of 'Elizabeth' of the German Garden"[2], in the year 1905. There he was to spend some time as a tutor to her three elder children. The recent history of Germany passed quickly through my mind. What had old England to do with all that?! Forster had been there, apparently looking for a change of scenario, for a break from the constraints of a country still utterly marked by the Victorian conservatism. Germany was an alternative, Countess von Arnim the pretext.

A couple of years later, and again accidentally, I happened to be listening to one of those BBC programmes that broadcast on issues of the British culture, and it was then that I first got acquainted with Christopher Isherwood, or, to be more precise, that I became fully aware of his existence and importance. Yes, I had seen "Cabaret", but, alas, who would then think of the man who had written the work the script was based on? Where did he come from?!

There I was, fascinated and curious. I had to learn more! I left home and entered the nearest bookshop. There were two books by Christopher Isherwood, in English! I was in luck! In a French speaking country, when the EU was not the Union but the Community, the EEC, I had found *Christopher and his Kind* and *Goodbye to Berlin* in English! It was thus that the adventure commenced! Christopher Isherwood led to Stephen Spender, Stephen Spender led to Wystan Auden, all of them led back to Morgan Forster[3] and an altogether new world seemed to lie open before me!

This work is but a small tribute to all of them for the infinite joy they have brought to my life. My admiration and my respect grew at the same rhythm as my readings unfolded.

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[1] See Archive documents reference.

[2] Elizabeth von Arnim (1866-1941) was an Australian-born British novelist: Mary Annette Beauchamp by birth, she married the Graf von Arnim-Schlagenthin, and became by a second marriage Countess Russell. *Elizabeth and her German Garden* is the title of her best known novel.

[3] We refer to Edward Morgan Forster often as 'Morgan Forster'. Morgan, his middle name, was the name he liked to call himself by, also his friends called him Morgan or Morgan Forster. All his letters to friends were signed 'Morgan'. Therefore, the moment we engaged in this work, since he was to be our company for a long length of time, it was our decision to refer to him in a number of occasions as 'Morgan Forster' too.

Throughout the years, my retrospect concerns about their never-ending searches and worries, especially in war time, have gradually increased. This work is also for them, as a token of my gratitude for the time well spent in their company. It could not have been more rewarding!

Introduction or a Passage to Forster

This research work seeks to be an interdisciplinary attempt to study the works and life trajectories of E.M. Forster, Christopher Isherwood and the writers of the thirties' with the very aim to provide an explanation for the development of their various phases, the shifts in their interests often dictated by the historical moment they were going through, hereupon exploring the intricate interrelationships between the events of their time and their literary evolution. It further seeks to trace E.M. Forster's influences on the work of Christopher Isherwood, and the importance of the latter's militant work on the various grounds of his choice, be they political, of gender or religious. The contributions of W.H. Auden and Stephen Spender are of the utmost importance for the understanding of an epoch filled with successive convulsions that, one way or another brought forth considerable changes in the lives of the European peoples. However interesting and enlightening it might be, it would at the same time be rather ambitious to want to study all the four writers within the scope of this research work, for it would raise a dual constraint of time and space. We shall, however, endeavour to deal with both W.H. Auden and Stephen Spender with as much care and attention as they deserve. The literary collaboration between Auden and Isherwood, although its quality has not always been considered by the critics as being excellent for they seem to have, to some degree, sacrificed the literary demands in favour of political urgency (as we shall have in due time the opportunity to develop) seems to us of particular relevance since it is a proof of the writers' good faith and active political involvement in the affairs of their time. Thus we clearly situate them in the field of concrete political action.

We further seek to emphasize the impact of the political events of the first half of the 20th century, namely the Spanish Civil War and World War Two, in the work of the younger writers whose disquietude and restlessness were dictated by the full consciousness they had of the historical route and the necessity to intervene, in one way or other, to change the course of events. Particularly as writers and intellectuals, they were fully aware of their role in the society. We shall therefore concentrate on the relations between Forster and the writers of the thirties' and a circle of friends connected with the intellectual environment of 2Oth century England, their misgivings and concerns, and how that influenced their outlook on life and the world. While profoundly touched by the outstanding significance of the events of their own time, these men were almost forced to bring into their own work the concerns of an epoch, whose political, and for that matter, historical developments came to dictate the rules by which we all now function. They were all informed by a "historical awareness" that led them to envisage their artistic endeavour as novelists and poets as something so utterly consequential that they could hardly escape their momentum.

This study was first thought to focus on Forster's work as a novelist, but some new issues related to E.M. Foster's literary production and life brought to us in recently published literature, which we shall in due time clarify, made us change the course of our research. We decided then to work on the author rather as a citizen integrated in the establishment,

fighting within it, using the margin allowed for dissent, making his own options, living with the limitations imposed upon him by his own homosexuality and the established social and political order. Therefore we chose to have him accompanied by Christopher Isherwood and some other intellectuals of Isherwood's generation, namely Stephen Spender, Wystan Auden, and others, as said above, who cannot be dissociated from him and from the artistic, intellectual, social and political environment of the epoch. Isherwood was also a homosexual and experienced difficulties similar to those the older writer had to face. Even though twenty six years separated both men, their friendship was to last a lifetime.

When in 2008 Richard E. Zeikowitz's book featuring the correspondence between Forster and Isherwood came out, we thought it a good start to approach both writers. The book bears the title *Letters between Forster and Isherwood on Homosexuality and Literature*, undoubtedly a good one to fulfil our purposes of studying the itinerary of the two writers. But a careful and thorough reading made clear that marketing imperatives may have played an important role in the choice of such title. Imperatives of the market economy, where books are as much a commodity as any other item, and the title would certainly sell well. The preface that introduced the letters, written with great respect and admiration, we must admit, unveils what is to be found in the letters between the two men, the two writers, and the two friends. The development of a solid friendship is to be witnessed throughout the whole volume. And what the publisher announced as "letters on homosexuality and literature" is, in the end, an array of letters between two friends of decades that reach out to every single subject liable to be discussed in the course of a lifetime, which, obviously included also homosexuality since they were both homosexuals, many of their friends shared the same sexual preferences, the issue was also a political issue in the sense it was ground for law pursuits and discrimination and therefore also ground for leading their struggle towards recognition, fair treatment and equality. It must be noticed that in England homosexuality was decriminalized, though not altogether, only in 1967, when finally the Labouchère Amendment[4] was revoked, but the thorough end of this Amendment would come only in 2003.

Literature was also a very obvious and extensive subject of discussion in the letters between the two writers, and two very good and recognised writers. In this respect, Zeikowitz is also right: it is a volume of letters between the two men which deals with questions of literature. The efforts entailed by Christopher Isherwood with his friend for the publication of *Maurice*, for example, the decisions and choices vis-à-vis the contents and their presentation are sometimes very touching since Isherwood, so it seems, wished to see the novel published one day, with Forster's consent. His aim was eventually achieved. Isherwood

[4] The Labouchère Amendment, or the Criminal Law Amendment Act 1885, came to substitute the law previously in force which, because of its harshness, was extremely seldom put into practice. It foresaw life imprisonment, even death penalty. MP Henry Labouchère proposed a more forcible law which criminalized sexual relations between males considering them as Gross Indecency. In 1967, the Sexual Offences Act made homosexual conduct, since in private, between males aged over 21, possible. Only the Sexual Offences Act 2003 fully decriminalized sexual relations between males.

was to have the full rights for the publication in the United States as a letter dated October 15th, 1952, from Forster's King's College dwellings, accounts for:

> "Dear Christopher Isherwood,
> As agreed I write a formal letter to confirm my gift to you of one of the typescripts of *Maurice*.
> It is your property, and I assign you the right to arrange for its publication in the U.S.A. after my death. You have the right to sign the necessary contracts and to receive all royalties and other payments." (Zeikowitz, 2008, p.152)

But the letters also deal with questions of war and peace, of freedom, of commitment, of truth as opposed to hypocrisy, of love, of friendship, of concern about the fate of family, friends, and of Humanity in general, as well as with the pain two people undergo apropos the most various issues in the course of two long lives, trips and holidays, meetings, either political or literary, or simply personal, and so on.

Something called our attention though in Zeikowitz's (2008) introduction which, somehow, was determinant, and eventually dictated a turn in our work. On page six of his introduction, Zeikowitz squarely asserts that Forster was "decidedly apolitical". Here is what he states: "Forster himself was decidedly apolitical and even when war was eminent did not add his voice to those who strongly advocated fighting the Germans" (2008, p.6). This assertion seems to us the most unjust and thoroughly inaccurate. Already from a very early age E. M. Forster showed political concerns, at first very timidly, like the ones he displays in his *Nassenheide* text[5] to his participation in the Red Cross as "Searcher in the Wounded and Missing Department of the Red Cross". So was his title, according to Wendy Moffat (2010, p.124), during World War One, or, already in 1934, when he becomes President of the Council for Civil Liberties (Gillie, 1993, p.6). We shall in due course have the opportunity to develop and justify our point of view as far as this particular issue is concerned. Zeikowitz might not have thought about this nor, for instance, about E. M. Forster's participation in the First International Congress of the Writers in Defence of Culture, where he was one of the main speakers and raised his voice in favour of peace and against the ongoing state of European affairs. This was in Paris, in 1935.

The reading of the letters between the two men displayed a completely different view as far as our understanding goes: there is always a profound concern regarding the politics of the time, a certain discomfort before the injustices and a gigantic preoccupation vis-à-vis the outcome of certain policies, national and international, that launched Britain, Europe and the world into a war whose outcome and aftermath were unknown and whose prospects were quite sombre.

[5] Steinweg was the German tutor who was in charge throughout the time Forster served Contess von Arnim, at Nassenheide, in 1905. Referring to a possible meeting with him years later, he expresses himself this way "The year I thought of going to stop with him the war broke out. I got a letter through via Holland and received a reply: he said in it that one didn't really notice in Pomerania that there was a war and that he was certain of victory. Our intercourse ended on that note". It seems quite clear that he understood which side he was on. (E. M. Forster, 2008, p.209).

It was on these grounds that we found it necessary to dig into Forster's writings, getting hold not only of his work as a novelist, but mainly of his work that reveals Forster as a man concerned with the problems and politics of his own time. This was an attempt to reshape the idea of an "apolitical" Forster. And we reached the conclusion that we had been right from the start when we thought Forster to hold political views and concerns which went far beyond the homosexual issue – which somehow can also be considered a political issue since it is also determined by the establishment that decides whether or not to accept it, to consider it an aberration or a disease or to see it somehow as simply a matter of difference, thus dictating the fate of a segment of the society which has been throughout time prevented from leading perfectly normal lives - or his literary perspectives.

It was clear in Forster's work, namely his novels, essays and broadcasts how attentive he was vis-à-vis his environment, how carefully he always chose his object at the BBC microphones. He was never to ignore the dispensation he was inserted in. It is interesting to note how careful he also was as far as his image as a writer should be preserved. It is the environment in which the historical process develops that determines the reaction. Why at a certain point did he choose to destroy his "indecent writings", as he called them, if not because of the hostile environment? Why should he be worried about the public judgment if their literary quality was recognizable? We came to acknowledge from what was left of such writings. In 1922, he writes in his diary:

> "April 5th (home), I have this moment burnt my indecent writings or as many as the privy (unreadable) will take. Not a moral repentance, but the belief that they clogged me artistically. They were written not to express myself but to excite myself, and when first – 15 years back? – I began them I had a feeling that I was doing something positively dangerous to my career as a novelist. I am not ashamed of them – or of my indecent thoughts and acts or of the indecent writings… all of which I shall not burn. It is just that I have a wrong channel for my pen." (Forster, s.d. [manuscript])[6].

Why then "a wrong channel" for his pen? Some of his writings of this kind survived and are now included in his volumes of short stories, namely *The Life to Come, The Other Boat* or *The Obelisk*.

While it is true that Forster, throughout his novels, loose texts, essays, or others, hardly ever gives any kind of political orientation as far as militancy is concerned, it is also true that he never attempted to conceal his liberal humanist views which were, one way or another, always present in his work. He was no doubt, and as an extraordinary observer, extremely aware of what was going on around him, always trying to find a justification for the developments he happened to witness. And, maybe, this attitude might have misled Zeikowitz into thinking of Forster as "apolitical".

So, it was Richard Zeikowitz who gave us the push to engage into a different kind of analysis, different from our previous plan, which will have a much more political bend – the

[6] This text is included in the set of documents I consulted in the E.M.F Collection, in the Archives at King's College, in March 2012 – See Archive Documents reference.

issue of homosexuality is certainly not to be ignored in our work, but also other political issues which throughout Forster's life were the object of his worries and concerns. Thus, a thorough reading of the texts which encompass the *Abinger Harvest* volume clearly show up to what extent he was a committed citizen and how his personal path was carefully chosen as a child of the British Empire. We shall next advance some considerations on two of his best known volumes of texts (we shall leave out of this brief analysis *Aspects of the Novel)*, and a volume of his BBC chosen broadcasts from 1929 to 1960, entitled *The BBC Talks of E. M. Forster 1929-1960,* which came out in 2008, after the careful endeavour of Mary Lago, Linda Hughes, and Elizabeth Macleod Walls, where the task to follow his involvements, concerns and options both in time of peace and war seems to have been facilitated.

Abinger Harvest contains texts which range from 1903 to 1936, the year of its publication, and *Two Cheers for Democracy*, which was published just after 1936, and as E. M. Forster himself explains in his prefatory note of the 1951 edition, the title for the collection of this set of articles, broadcasts and essays which, at an embryonic phase, was to be called *The Last of Abinger Harvest*. But at the age of seventy two, Forster asserts that he does not want to write the last of anything thus preferring the title suggested to him as a joke by a young friend - *Two Cheers for Democracy*. He reckoned that it might be a good title for the collection and adopted it, and *The Last of Abinger* remained as the book's closing text. The time scope is of fifteen years counting from 1936. Forster found it useful to divide the book into two sections which are not necessarily chronologically arranged. It is of some relevance to acknowledge the optimism he envisages life, hoping to raise "three cheers for democracy" in a time to come, for in 1951 it only deserved one. The first and opening section is under the title *The Second Darkness*, the second section being *What I Believe*.

As we have been arguing from the start, both history and social and political settings do not work independently and the individual, voluntarily or not, consciously or unconsciously therefore, will bring into his or her work the marks of his or her own time. It was not different with Forster, and his works are indeed political. It is Forster himself who acknowledges this as a matter of course. Referring to the opening section of *Two Cheers for Democracy*, he states "the climate is political" (Forster, 1951, p.xi) while the "climate" in the following section - *What I Believe*, although covering the same *laps de temps,* and dated 1938, "is ethical and aesthetic" (Forster, 195, p.xi). The essay entitled *What I Believe* is indeed Forster's political testament. Consequently, it will be dealt with in this research work with the careful attention it really deserves, since it brings light onto what the writer most heartfelt thoughts of the world and his perspective of what it should in fact be.

Whether Richard Zeikowitz simply meant that E. M. Forster was never in his life committed to a political party or political organisation, which proved to be true, remains an enigma. It cannot in any way be denied that Forster used his skills and his prestige as a writer and broadcaster and put them at the service of the society and, more often than not, in times of crisis. His texts and broadcasts certainly bore some weight and it remains to be known whether they more than played a role in any of the existing political parties. Stephen

Spender, who himself had joined the Communist Party in England in the winter of 1936 - 1937, was not so sure and wondered whether a good book, "with things one cares for", would not be preferable (Spender, 1980, p.123). We tend to give his assertion some credit. Forster carefully chose his realm and the political and social environment clearly determined the trajectory of his own choices. The contents of the *Second Darkness* – which we believe may refer to the Second World War, and thus implicitly considering the First World War as the "first darkness", all have to do with the question of freedom and tolerance, the Jew-consciousness, and Germany. As an artist, in the second section he allowed himself to deal with topics concerning the arts: art in general, where he reflects upon the importance of arts and culture as well as the duty of society to the artist and vice-versa, and arts in action, where he makes considerations about some artists and their artistic production. In the very last part of *Two Cheers for Democracy* he indulges in visits across places which mattered in his life.

Another important reason why we decided that we should deal in more detail with questions linked to the intellectuals' involvement in politics, the artists' options in time of crisis, their activities, their commitments and their artistic production rather than dealing in detail with issues linked to the homosexual preferences of almost all the protagonists in this work, is due to the fact that Wendy Moffat published *E. M. Forster – A New Life* in 2010. Why then should this particular volume help to change the direction of our research work?

After having read, in the course of long years, almost every Forster's biography or guide available, no matter which form it was presented in, from Furbank to Gillie, Martial Rose or Trilling, the Moffat book presents itself as something entirely new. Wendy Moffat, after a persistent and thorough work, comes out with the most astonishing revelations a Forster academic could face him/herself with. Moffat called her book *E. M. Forster – A New Life*. And indeed it *is* new. In it, Wendy Moffat scrutinises Morgan Forster's life from his birth to his death revealing the most intimate details that, in our perspective, previous biographers of E. M. Forster had kept concealed for reasons that might have had to do with preserving a certain privacy of such a distinguished personality. Hers is a courageous even daring work, and so much so that it can, at times, raise almost painful feelings particularly when she delves into the writer's most private thoughts and practices. This was our case, and therefore, although feeling grateful and owing her a great deal for what she was able to accomplish and provide us with, and in spite of using much information which helped us to ameliorate our own work, we decided that, as far as the issue of homosexuality related to Forster and his friends was concerned, the intimate details and choices had been dealt with in such detailed manner in her book that very little was left to comment upon. We certainly will not entirely dismiss the issue since it did play a crucial role in their lives and, consequently, in their creative work as well as in their options, but we did target other realms, namely political, while studying these men.

Moffat's life of Forster, it must be acknowledged, provides a whole amount of new information and is worth reading while, at the same time, it is indeed an inestimable source to anyone working on E.M. Forster's life and literary production.

Apart from the reasons already pointed out as having been the main causes for our decision to take up this line of work, there is underlying, of course, a lifelong passion for politics and the absolute conviction that politics preside over literary and artistic choices and decisions, and is envisaged as an insurmountable reality. The theoreticians of our choice were themselves, in most cases, also politically active, whether Marxists, like Terry Eagleton or Marxist critics, like Louis Althusser or Michel Foucault, freedom fighters like Antonio Gramsci or Raymond Williams, or the younger generations of dissent like Alan Sinfield, Jonathan Dollimore or Stephan Greenblatt. They all provided us with a political analysis and attempted explanations or advanced solutions for more and better arrangements for the society as a whole and, consequently, for mankind. The men whose lives and activities we propose to study belong to this category of concerned intellectuals.

Although our wish is to be able to make use of the largest amount of work on the writers in question, constraints of space and time will have to countermand our initial wish. We shall thus limit ourselves basically to the use of primary sources both in what regards the writers themselves, and the theoreticians who supplied us with the fundamental concepts of "ideology", "alienation", "hegemony" and "culture" which, as will be clarified throughout the next chapter, have been the basis of our discernment and reasoning, and will work as the chief pillars to support our research work.

Without intending to be too extensive, we shall certainly refer to most of E.M. Forster's novels as well as two of his short stories, *The other Boat*, which is in size almost a novelette, and *The Life to Come* that, together with *Maurice*, will form a unit which overtly deals with the issue of homosexuality, the same way that we intend to refer to a great part of Christopher Isherwood's fictional works, with particular incidence on those related to his German period. We shall try not to be too exhaustive or fastidious, but for the purpose of our analysis, since from the outset we have given a privileged relevance to the writers' contemporary historical issues, we find of particular significance to deal with the works which are liable to shed some light onto questions such as homosexuality, colonialism and imperialism, war and peace, militancy and pacifism.

A Passage to India, Forster's last novel, should here be the object of very close attention for, in our opinion, it is precisely where Forster's dissident voice can better be heard. The same applies to *Maurice*, which by its very nature must be dealt with in a detailed manner. Also here Forster's dissident voice can be understood, regardless of the fact that the work was only posthumously published, and accusations against him precisely on those grounds have meanwhile been made public. We shall look into the countless details that presided over the publication of *Maurice* and up to what degree this might have approached both Forster and Isherwood. It is also our hope to be able to answer those accusations and make clear how unfair they prove to be.

Where Angels fear to Tread (the originally titled *Monteriano*), published in 1905, also *The Longest Journey*, Forster's second novel, first published in 1907, and *A Room with a View*, published in the following year, will serve the purpose of our analysis and may be the object of an alternative reading. Both *Where Angels Fear to Tread* and *A Room with a View* are set in Italy as well as England, where tradition mixes with more modern issues such as women's liberation, the question of the marriage institution in modern and traditional terms. It is interesting to note, and we dare say that not displaced, the idea that Ibsen might have been important in the rise of these questions. It was not long before that the Norwegian dramatist had dealt with these issues and set the pace for a new agenda. And we do believe it since Forster was a fervent admirer of his work as shown in his 1928 essay on Henrik Ibsen (Forster, 1955, pp.78-84).

In the two last novels mentioned, Forster's resistance, his dissenting voice, will have to be worked through, for at a first and less attentive reading it may be considered, or confused with, a supportive position of the contemporary state of affairs. And it is exactly here that we should be at work as some of his younger contemporaries were and not dismiss him as belonging to a generation that is to be blamed for having caused the dreadful outcome that the world witnessed throughout the first half of the 20th century. For this new generation Forster was "a modern writer", his work was touched by modernity, notwithstanding the fact that the historical, social and political context he was born into was highly conservative:

> "Forster, however, escaped the wrath of the younger generation and his novels were regarded as 'modern'." (Zeikowit, 2008, p.4).

Forster's "modernism" will be dealt with in detail in a further chapter.

So it is possible to have an all-encompassing reading of Forster's novels and find out how the dominant culture and thought were at work, and how they, simultaneously, were under scrutiny, deconstructed, thus exposing both traditional institutions and established systems.

We also found it worth looking into Forster's talks on the BBC between 1929 and 1964. They are presented in a selected Edition, edited by Mary Lago, Linda K. Hughes, and Elizabeth Macleod Walls, by the Missouri Press, in 2008. Arranged chronologically, they will also prove to have been very helpful to trace the evolution of the writer, the ways he found to use the margin allowed to him by the establishment, his hopes and concerns, and the way he felt comfortable in the role of a (although discreet) committed intellectual.

We would like to give Christopher Isherwood the same kind of attention, that is to say, to look into his novels and also into some of his essays. It is our intention to establish a liaison between E.M. Forster and Isherwood and trace the influences that he had on the younger writer's work at the beginning of the latter's career. We shall refer to *All the Conspirators*, his first novel, published in 1928, and try to pay closer attention to the *Memorial*, his second novel, which first came out in 1932. In these first novels, especially *The Memorial,* the

modernist influence of E. M. Forster can be felt, and probably not only of E.M. Forster's but also that of Virginia Woolf. It seems the Bloomsbury group did play a part here.

We shall also call attention to the novels referring to the German period, which are imbued with an extraordinary awareness concerning the historical period they are set in. The collection which Isherwood named *The Berlin Stories* normally includes *Mr. Norris Changes Trains* and *Good Bye to Berlin*. These two novels were, however, also published autonomously, the former in 1955 and the latter in 1939. *Prater Violet*, based upon the character of the Austrian film director Berthold Viertel, published in 1945, illustrates quite clearly the political and ideological options of the young Isherwood.

In the course of our work it is our intention to make use of four pieces of writing Isherwood produced together with W.H. Auden. They will, unfortunately, be almost the only of Auden's writing material that we shall be using. In order of publication they are *The Dog Beneath the Skin or Were is Francis?*, 1935, *The Ascent of F6*, 1937, *On the Frontier*, 1938, and finally *Journey to a War*, 1939. Some of these plays were then staged in the London West End and also in the Cambridge Art Theatre by the Group Theatre with relative success. The *Ascent of F6* was even performed at the Old Vic, and in 1939, Forrest Thayr Jr. directed the Drove Players in New York (Isherwood, 2001, pp.268-269). The plays are now published in a joint volume whose title is *Auden-Isherwood Collaboration* and also individually. The two last volumes of their collaboration were the result of their trip together to report the Sino-Japanese war, just before World War Two.

As for Christopher Isherwood's novels alone, we also intend to comment, though briefly, on some of the later work, already of his American phase – *The World in the Evening* - since it was there that he found the right environment and peace of mind to work upon some issues which had long been the object of his attention and concern. It seems a little detachment from England and from Europe altogether was necessary for such reflections. We will be particularly keen to refer to the question of war.

The long period of correspondence between E.M. Forster and Christopher Isherwood, the years which mediate their first encounter and the older man's death, and fortunately made available since 2008, by Richard E. Zeikowitz, as said above, after a careful research work, will be of great use, especially to elucidate us on aspects of the two men's characters and most profound feelings. Morgan Forster's correspondence with the worldwide reputed Greek poet Constantine P. Cavafy (1863-1933), whom he happen to have made friends with while serving in the Red Cross, in Alexandria, will also be of great help to us in the sense that through that correspondence we can yet illustrate both the historical period as well as go into some aspects of Forster's own character. C. Cavafy's non-conformism together with his homosexuality, so often mirrored in his poetry, might have been some of the aspects that pleased and attracted E. M. Forster, and in his *Alexandria*, the Greek poet was not ignored.

Another field, that of autobiographies, proved to be indispensable. Christopher Isherwood's first autobiography, *Lions and Shadows*, published in 1938 and featuring his life as a young undergraduate, together with *Kathleen and Frank,* the biography of Isherwood's

parents, written by him after his mother's death and based upon letters, memories, his mother's diaries, and endless talks with his brother, a kind of tribute to his progenitors with whom he spent so little time of his life, will be useful in the sense that they will enable us to understand with quite a high degree of accuracy some of Isherwood's decisions of his earlier years as a very young man and explains some of his later moves.

Another autobiography of Christopher Isherwood came out much later, already in the United States, in 1976, whose illustrative title is *Christopher and his Kind*. It will be profusely used since it supplies us with valuable material as well as insights which are most enlightening mainly regarding his German years and the circle of friends and intellectuals that shared aspects of their lives with the writer, namely W. H. Auden and Stephen Spender.

His diaries will also be useful to attain the full understanding and extent of his own personal concerns, fears and, obviously, decisions. His outspoken temperament together with his almost painful sincerity constitutes inestimable material for our research purposes. He seems to have followed his mother's practice of diary keeping, and for almost sixty years he wrote with a fair frequency. The diaries have then been published in two volumes, the first of them ranging between the years 1939 and 1960, and the second one with entries from 1960 to 1969 which was entitled *The Sixties: Diaries Volume Two 1960-1969*. Both volumes were edited by Katherine Bucknell, whose work was scrupulous and clean.

In what regards Stephen Spender, we shall be looking into his autobiography, entitled *World within World*, which he chose to be "related to the background of events from 1928-1939" (Spender, 1951, p.vii), which obviously include the German years with Isherwood and Auden, and later gave rise to a court case in England on the grounds of the disparaging way his work had been dealt with by some critics. This work is demonstrably illustrative of the concerns, struggles, thoughts and positions taken by him and most of his intellectual relatives, where obviously Isherwood, Auden, Forster, William Plommer, Cecil Day-Lewis, Edward Upward, John Lehmann, Aldous Huxley and so many other intellectuals of his literary and political entourage are included, in a world which seemed to be falling apart. Spender's profound insights are of great relevance to shed light onto the path and options of a generation of intellectuals of not only brilliant capacities but also capable of using them in favour of humanity's wellbeing. Stephen Spender stands almost as the "historian" of the troubled decades after the First Word War and the end of the Second World War. His *Thirties and After* proved to be extremely enlightening for the understanding of the period. *Forward from Liberalism* is the young Spender's attempt to draw, as it were, a new model for life in society, which he was to reconsider some fifteen years later in *The God that Failed*, published with essays of other five writers that, like him, were to renounce communist ideals: Louis Fischer, Richard Wright, Arthur Köestler, Ignazio Silone and André Gide (Koestler et al., 1950).

This research work will be thus organised in the following chapters:

1 – Where Literary Studies Fear to Tread: Materialism, History, Texts and Contexts

This first chapter will constitute our theoretical approach to deal with the issues on which we intend to focus our attention, as explained above. Having as a starting point a Materialist stand, we deal with theoreticians such as the French philosophers Louis Althusser (for the concept of "Ideology") and Michel Foucault (for the concept of "power"); Antonio Gramsci (for the concept of "hegemony"), the English thinker Raymond Williams, the Cultural Materialists and the New Historicists, among others.

2 – Small Rooms with a View: About Forster's Loose Essays

In this second chapter, E. M. Forster's texts of a shorter dimension will be dealt with aiming at tracing the writer's political preferences as well as his involvement in the causes of his day. We chose texts from three distinct volumes: *Arbinger Harvest, Two Cheers for Democracy* and *The BBC Talks of E. M. Forster – 1929-1960* to try and find out about Forster's political thought and action.

3 – A Room of his Own : Forster's Modernism

At this stage of our work, an attempt to benchmark whether E. M. Forster can fully be said to be a Modernist or to belong to any particular and definite literary movement or trend is made. Here *A Passage to India* and the issue of imperialism will be tackled with some detail together with the impact his participation in World War One while serving in Egypt had in his literary production. *Maurice* and Forster's attempt to produce a gay novel as early as 1913-1914 will deserve our close analysis.

4 – The Thirties' Generation

We shall deal here with the involvement of intellectuals in politics. We will also delve into the lives as well as political moves and literary production of the writers of the so called "Thirties' Generation", namely Christopher Caudwell, Julian Bell, Rupert John Cornford and Ralph Fox who saw themselves "trapped" in the rapid tide of the dramatic events of the first half of the twentieth century. The League of Nations, The Spanish Civil War, the Second World War as well as the feeling of doom looming over Europe will be the object of our close attention.

5 – The Longest Journeys: The Survivors of the Thirties' Group

This fifth chapter will constitute the last part of our research work. In it we shall deal with the effects the successive wars and the various political systems established in the European countries had on the literary productions of the writers who survived that evil. We shall also endeavour to pay attention to the feeling of disenchantment and disillusionment that dictated the shifting of their militancy. The Auden-Isherwood literary collaboration will

be the object of our close attention, the same way that Spender's drama *Trial of a Judge* will deserve our careful analysis.

This study will end with a review of the issues dealt with in our work and the manifest worries and hopes for the times to come: "…And who can hope for more?: a sort of conclusion".

CHAPTER 1

Where Literature Studies Fear to Tread: Materialism, History, Texts and Contexts

We are profoundly convinced that the fate of the social individual is determined by the material conditions he happens to be inserted in. Thus each and every phenomenon is ultimately the reflex of interactions of a material nature, consciousness included. Therefore, it seems to us necessary to approach the real world by engaging in an analytical method of a materialist character.

1 Materialism and the basic roots of our approach

The proposed method attempts to clarify the existing relation between the intellectual productions and their impact on society, and since we believe that within the framework of the search for the ultimate causes, the material world is more relevant than the ideas we may possess in that respect, we consider the materialist analytical method to be the most convenient one to the purpose of our research work. Although neither Karl Marx nor Friedrich Engels, due to philosophical reasons, could fully subscribe to the principles which inform our proposition of analysis, our analytical perspective has, regarding the thought of both theoreticians, namely in what concerns the two core pillars of their theory of culture, a profound intellectual debt. In fact, whether we consider the concept of ideology or the notion of alienation, the proposed method in this research work is profusely marked by the theoretical assumptions which both concepts encompass.

1.1 Ideology

Unlike the idealist thinkers, whose proposition was that of the ideas, that man's intellectual activity was the driving force that led the process of the historical evolution, and hence, at a particular historical moment, man's material productions would be the reflection of the evolutional state of the individual or, for that matter, the collective consciousness, our belief is that, at a particular historical moment in a society, man's material existence is not the reflection of the state of development of their individual or collective consciousness, of their ideas, but on the contrary, it is the material condition of the individuals that determines their consciousness.

In the light of a purely Marxist approach, it is the mode of production, the material existence of the individual, which will determine the superstructure, that is to say, the way society is organized and therefore functions. Marx himself makes it quite clear:

> "The mode of production in material life determines the general character of the social, political and spiritual processes of life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but, on the contrary, their social existence determines their consciousness" (Marx, 1973, p.85).

Assuming that Karl Marx's quotation is not informed by any contradiction of concepts, and thus considering that the "social processes" in which man is involved, i.e. superstructure, is a distinct phenomenon from that of man's "social existence", i.e. base or infrastructure, at a certain moment of the historical process, the individual's social existence, in a Marxist

perspective, would originate the cultural productions which characterize that stage of evolution of the history of humanity.

The Marxist theory of culture is essentially based upon two fundamental pillars, that of ideology and that of alienation. Marx's own concept of ideology suffered some evolution throughout his intellectual productive activity, but it seems that for the purpose of our work the concept of ideology that he conceived between the years 1845 and 1847, which deals with the material origin of ideas, serves our particular goal.

For Marx, ideology corresponds to a state of false consciousness. In a capitalist society, for instance, the state of evolution of the productive forces gives rise to real social contradictions between the owners of the capital and wage workers, between agriculture and industry, between preferences of the producers and interests of the consumers, and so on. Thus, those contradictions merely reflect the limited nature of the mode of production, distribution and consumption which characterize society at a particular moment of the historical process; therefore, they are virtually unsolvable. The material impossibility of the members of a particular society to solve (or even fully understand) the social contradictions on the ground, lead them into overcoming those real contradictions by means of ideological forms of consciousness, i.e., to work out solutions of a purely mental and discursive character, which do nothing but distort the nature of those very contradictions.

In these circumstances, these contradictions and distortions tend to be reproduced and consequently favour the interests of the dominant class. According to Marx, ideology is thus a negative concept, because it does not in any way clarify the nature of contradictions, but, on the reverse, it does intensify their distortion and misrepresentation. It is also a restrictive concept since it does not identify all sorts of distortions and failures. Ideological distortions are not bound to be surmounted by way of criticism, and the categories of true and false are not applied.

In fact, it does work otherwise: Ideological distortions will only be overcome when the contradictions that gave rise to them are no more in existence. This way, the disappearance of the contradictions which are on the origin of the ideological distortions is, however, only conceivable in a classless society. This debate, however interesting and appealing it might be, does not fit in the framework of our research.

1.1.1 Alienation

If we think of ideology as being a distorted consciousness of the material reality in which the individual is inserted, then alienation, in our view, can be conceived as a pathology which women and men dwelling within a material space structured by the capitalist mode of production suffer from. So, alienation is a process according to which the members of a society are led to become complete "foreign" to their own selves as well as to the world that surrounds them. Hence, within the framework of the materialist thought of both Marx and Engels, the sole and exclusive source of alienation is linked to the material conditions of the

individual's existence. According to the Marxist thought, alienation is always linked to the alienation of the "self", and manifests itself in four distinct realms.

The first realm has to do with the relation of the producer, the actual maker, with the material outcome of his productive activity. With the capitalist system, industrialism settled and the mode of production changed dramatically. Machinery was introduced giving rise to whole new ways of producing. Methods such as the repetition of tasks or the production chains came to substitute the traditional ways of producing, where a worker was responsible, from beginning to end, for the object he was engaged in creating. So, the almost emotional liaison that the worker had with the object disappeared, and he started to be just one small piece which, on its turn, was part of the chain of the whole process of production. Whatever came out of his hands was no longer a whole unit, as in the more traditional mode of production, but, on the contrary, part of a unit. The worker thus ceased to recognize as his own what he had produced. That meant nothing or meant just a means of his subsistence, and the notions of capital, market and merchandise became the expression of that alienation in what relates the product of labour. The worker got acquainted with the notions of offer and demand till then unknown to him. An irreversible detachment was then settled. The worker was gradually alienating himself, and without knowing it suffering from a "waning of affect", as the American Marxist critic Fredric Jameson put it (Jameson, 1991, p.60). This lack of emotion seems to have swept the whole society subjected to the capitalist rule.

The second realm considered is that of alienation concerning the individual and his natural environment, his relationship with nature itself. The capitalist system of production has managed to transform nature to its own interest thus turning it into something merchandisable so that a whole set of natural resources are explored and made profitable. The capitalist system exploits nature till the exhaustion limit is attained to obtain the raw materials so as to fulfil the needs of its production units, thus provoking the termination of certain natural resources in what can be considered a brutal manifestation of its greed. Paradoxically, capitalism turns nature into a gigantic waste dumping site, as in the case of the oceans. Hence, the capitalist mode of production materialized in the economic "exploitation" of nature creates a real barrier between nature itself and the common individual. The foreseeable future unavailability of natural resources indispensable for the survival of life on the planet earth is the ultimate proof of the insurmountable contradictions raised by the capitalist desire for material wealth.

Our third realm relates to the alienation of the individual towards his fellowmen. The capitalist mode of production does disrupt all the fundamental social bonds which connect the different elements within a society. The relations between individuals become utterly difficult to handle in the sense that the existing contradictions are responsible for the enormous cleavages in the society. The society is divided into social classes, so that everyone knows where he belongs. The division of men with the creation of the State gives rise to a barrier between those who rule and those who are ruled, and the law as an instrument of class domination is another factor of division. An inescapable distance is thus created

between members of the same society by means of contradictory interests. The alienated individual, as a product of the capitalist mode of production, sees in his fellow citizens potential competitors as if everyone were opposed to everyone else so as an hypothetical approach is virtually made impossible.

The fourth and final realm taken into account is connected with the alienation of the individual towards his own self. As broached above when dealing with the Marxist concept of ideology, we considered the capitalist system of production as being accountable for the feeling of remoteness of the individual concerning the product of his own labour, and we add now that that feeling of remoteness is, in turn, accountable for the alienation of the individual regarding his historical possibilities. He ceases to recognize the world he lives in thus sheltering himself in morals, religion, family, philosophy, summing up in all sorts of demands he may possible envisage as a refuge to keep him apart, however, the sole element missing is the lack of consciousness as regards his own historical potentialities and the use he may make of them for the improvement of the self.

According to Marx's perspective, alienation as a pathology is not irrevocable, and a process of "des-alienation" could be conceivable by means of profound mutations of the principles which govern the modes of production, distribution and consumption. Great interest has been accorded to the idea of ideology as well as that of alienation in such a way that it still makes sense to carry on and promote research and debates on the field.

1.1.2 Limits of the Marxist Cultural Theory

In our perspective, the Marxist cultural theory presents two questions which seem to be relevant and it is worth it to analyse: the first question is linked to the "universal" and "timelessness" value of the work of art, regardless of the mode of production which presided over its creation. One second aspect has to do with Marx's and Engels's so-called determinism.

Marx and also Engels seem not to have been very assertive in what concerns the question of culture and cultural productions. If the cultural productions are a super-structural outcome of the social relations, how is it possible that art survives over time regardless of the succession of the modes of production in the history of Humanity? In his *Introduction to the Grundrisse*, Marx (1973) tells us that

> "In the case of arts, it is well known that certain periods of their flowering are out of all proportion to the general development of society, hence also to the material foundation, the skeletal structure, as it were, of its organization. For example, the Greeks compared to the moderns or also Shakespeare. It is even recognized that certain forms of art, e.g. the epic, can no longer be produced in their world epoch-making, classical stature as soon as the production of art, as such, begins; that is, that certain significant forms within the realm of arts are possible only at an undeveloped stage of artistic development" (Marx, 1973, p.10).

The fact that major art as that produced by the Greeks did not fit into his own base-superstructure pattern that in a society which was not economically developed such art was possible and remained throughout the ages recognizable as good art and still "provides

aesthetic pleasure" (Marx, 1973, p.10) is for him quite puzzling. He does, however, acknowledge that difficulty, and seeks to supply us with an answer to that. It seems, nonetheless, that his justification for this phenomenon is rather unconvincing.

He argues that a man can find joy in the "child's naiveté" and wonders whether man should not struggle to reproduce that truth. Furthermore, he questions "Why should not the historic childhood of humanity, its most beautiful unfolding, as a stage never to return exercise an eternal charm?" (Marx, 1973, p.10), and goes on explaining that the charm of Greek art "is not in contradiction to the undeveloped stage of society on which it grew", but it is rather linked to the "unripe social conditions" within which it was produced. (Marx, 1973, p.10).The fact that Greek art and literature can still provide aesthetic pleasure makes them "universal" and "timeless"; this fact Marx seems to recognize, somehow unwillingly, for it is but an allowance Marx is making in what concerns a bourgeois ideology (Selden, Widdowson and Brooker, 2005, pp.83-84). When we refer to Marx's "unwillingness", we can surely understand his reasons. They seem to be reminiscent of his prior education, and we are here, obviously referring to Hegelian ways of formulating ideas about artistic production, which is to say "to evoke and realize all the power of man's soul, to stir him into a sense of his creative plenitude" (Eagleton, 2002, p.73).

It is widely known that both Marx and Engels allowed great room for free movement in what concerns the issue of arts and literature. A highly learned man on the fields of literature and art, Marx developed a certain taste, which ranged from Greek art to Balzac or Tolstoy that even he was not able to fully explain, or to be more precise, fit into his own postulate of a determining base and a determined superstructure, as already broached above. As he expressed, the evolution on the field of arts and literature were not necessarily the immediate reflection of mutations in the economic dispensation and the existing class relations. Somehow, an accurate explanation for such phenomena seems to fail him, we believe.

The second aspect broached is related to the determinism Marx and Engels are, so very often, accused of by their detractors, and so many theoreticians have elaborated on, in an attempt to shed light on this issue. It is true that both Marx and Engels have always been considered deterministic by a great many authors, in the sense that the mode of production would, in a mechanical way, determine all the elements that constitute the superstructure. A benign interpretation of the thought of both thinkers would be to try and equate the relevant elements of materiality, which is to say, the mode of production, distribution and consumption as not really deterministic but simply as constraining elements according to the Marxist thought. And here, we tend to believe, lies, to a great degree, the difference between some distorted versions of the Marxist thought and those thinkers who, although not losing sight of the basic Marxist premises, evolved to and developed and extended the concept to the field of culture.

As for Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, their proposition, though deterministic as it may seem, was liable to be allowed some margin of movement, namely in what the intellectual

and artistic productions were concerned, as suggested above. It was Engels who better clarified this question. Maybe some light might be shed on this particular issue if we paid close attention how Engels expresses his feeling on the subject, in a letter to J. Bloch, in 1890:

> "According to the materialist conception of history, the ultimately determining element in history is the production and reproduction of real life. More than this neither Marx nor I have ever asserted. Hence if somebody twists this into saying that the economic element is the only determining one, he transforms that proposition into a meaningless, abstract and absurd phrase. The economic situation is the basis but the various elements of the superstructure (…) political forms of the class struggle and its consequences (…) forms of law – and even the reflexes of all these actual struggles in the brains of the combatants: political, legal and philosophical theories, religious ideas and their further development into systems of dogma – also exercise their influence upon the course of the historical struggles and in many cases preponderate in determining their form." (Marx and Engles, 1965, p.475)

As opposed to the detractors of the Marxist thought, the relation that is established between the materiality of the social relations and the immateriality of the cultural productions, or, for that matter, of any other phenomena of a super-structural nature, was never conceived by Marx or Engels on a determinist basis. It seems that Engels was well aware that the development of the class struggle may take turns and produce particular outcomes that their seemingly deterministic view might not have considered, therefore the admittance of a certain margin of indetermination regarding the interaction which is always established between base and superstructure.

1.1.3 First Proposition of a Personal Possible Synthesis

Being materialist, our proposition takes into serious account the existing link between the intellectual and the artistic production on the one hand, and the material conditions of the individual's existence on the other, that is to say his socio-economic environment. In our view, what really inspires the reasoning and the judgment of the social being is the fact that the labour relations function within the framework of very definite hierarchies which give rise to various modes of existence, hence what is effectively reasoned or judged is liable to vary according to those specific conditions.

This, however, does not differentiate us from the classical Marxist thought. What genuinely differentiates us is the relevance that we allow culture as a crucial factor in the evolution of the human societies, and although we tend to generally agree with the Marxist proposition, we also think that one element is missing here – our concrete life is determined by culture, a claim, which in theoretical terms, is of the utmost importance. While trying to clarify the limits of the Marxist theory of culture we have already broached the idea that intellectual productions may also be encompassed within the infrastructure framework, and thus greatly and decisively influence the superstructure. There seems to be no difference between the wage worker who produces a cup and the intellectual who produces a book. Furthermore, both products, once on the market, will turn into commodities to be subjected

to the same capitalist logic, that is to say, the treatment given to them is the same. We then contend that the intellectual productions are commodities in the sense that they, although not necessarily material in *stricto senso*, are commodities nonetheless. However, artistic and literary creations are part of the productive activity, but while commodities produced by the wage workers, in a capitalist dispensation, are but mere commodities to satisfy whatever material necessities men have, intellectual commodities attain a different threshold.

Intellectual productions, rather than being mere objects liable to be used, with no other claims, are commodities rather destined to, one way or another, influence the behaviour of other fellowmen, and thus assigned for the specific goal of producing a determined outcome. They will have to obey the market rules of the capitalist system, and their sales, like any ordinary commodity, are destined to raise profit. Regardless of the fact that we are talking about literary or, for that matter, artistic productions, they will always work as a means of conveyance of ideas favouring the established order of things, but they can also, on the reverse, function as a means to convey change and dissidence and, therefore, play the role of challenging elements to the established order. They can be a means for enhancing change and "des-alienation", but they alone are never powerful enough to enhance the change of the capitalist system.

We then contend that intellectual creations are productive activities, which are situated at the "base" level and consequently are bound to give rise to mutations at the super-structural level, for which they are as responsible as any other productive activity. However, if one is to consider the cultural productions as commodities, which they also are, the impact of this type of commodity on society has very particular repercussions. Depending on the ideas they convey, they may be an instrument of "alienation", because they find room within the framework of the established culture or, contrariwise, they may be a tool of "des-alienation" and here they situate themselves within a different framework, that of a counter-culture. In fact, although not all counter-cultures are "des-alienating", in a capitalist society all alienation forces are necessarily placed within the framework of a counter-culture.

Here we go back to the concept of "alienation" as defined by Karl Marx and, according to him, we are not doomed to remain "alienated". Hence, we contend that intellectual productions can this way turn into active instruments of "des-alienation" when intellectuals, writers and artists in general set themselves, as agency, the task to make use of their capacities to question and challenge the establishment. In spite of the fact that literary productions are "commodities", according to our way of viewing them, they are commodities that influence, therefore, also potential instruments of "des-alienation", and, as broached above, accountable for the settling of a counter- culture.

Let us try and make clear what we mean by this assertion. We do believe that the way the society produces, distributes and consumes creates a vast range of possibilities, that is to say, frontiers of possibilities, and it is within these frontiers that men are allowed to move and develop their activities. And it is precisely within this vast area, this field of action, that the actors, in this case by means of their intellectual production, find a space of liberty and

try to take advantage of it by challenging the establishment, fighting the set norms imposed upon them by the ruling class, and in so doing creating room for new modes of living, for new ideas – for ideas are, according to our point of view, utterly relevant - to arise and take shape, and ultimately create a road map for change.

Trespassing the frontiers set by the production relations is not at stake here. In a society, action is the reflex of the mode of production, and therefore, agency itself gives rise to constraints so absolutely relevant and inescapable, as if it were a material reality, a domineering element of socio-economic relations as important as the means of ordinary material production itself. As the social institutions are not liable to change in the short term and behave autonomously as if they were a material tangible reality, it is precisely within this reality that agency moves and finds its ground for shaping both the human being as well as society itself, as we have been arguing. Nonetheless, the effort and actions carried out by the actors are never in vain, for it is the outcome of their effort that eventually determines their ways of living and societal pattern change or maintenance.

Hence, the way history is actually going to evolve is conditioned, in our view, not only by the mode of production, distribution and consumption of commonly consuming commodities, but also by cultural components, that is to say, intellectual production, and it is precisely those components and the relations between them that interest us mostly. It is thus the equilibrium of forces between the dominant cultures and counter-cultures that emerge from the existing contradictions in society that determine, within the possible choices which are *a priori* unknown, what the outcome is going to be. It so happens that not uncommonly the struggle, we believe, does not take place on the conventional production front, but rather on the intellectual arena, which in the ultimate analysis distances us from the generally accepted Marxist logic.

The domineering bourgeoisie was certainly not to be fought against by the bourgeoisie. Marx had never thought so, but the social unrest and disruption throughout the 1960's, which started at the universities rather than at the factories (Inglis, 1999, pp.235-237) as the Marxist logic would have foreseen, were certainly illustrating and provided extensive material for rethinking the Marxist proposition, thus calling for adaptation to the modern times.

As presented, this view is not original and does not intend to be so. It was shared by many thinkers throughout the twentieth century who, one way or the other, tried to revise the original and somehow deterministic view of the founders of the historical materialist theory. Raymond Williams, when developing his "theory of culture", puts it as "the study of the relationships between elements in a whole way of life" (Williams, 1961, p.54).

In the chapter dedicated to our theoretical sources, we shall try and clarify both Raymond Williams' views on culture as well as some of the revisionist theories that helped us to formulate our proposition and will help us to construct our present work on the basis of the materialist theory. While not losing sight of the basic Marxist premises, we shall allow culture the role that we think it does play in the societies of our time.

1.2 Literature and Society

1.2.1 Art and literature as political devices

It is our belief that since no artist or, for that matter, no individual can surpass the limits of his own time, he has therefore to produce his artistic object within the boundaries of his own historical and political context, that is to say, he has to work within the field of a cultural environment built upon ideology and upon the current discourses. This way, when dealing with a literary work of a certain epoch a double perspective should be taken into account: the relation it has with actual history and the writer's ideological account of that history (Macherey, 1978, p.115).

Although we tend to think and unquestionably believe that the capacities we have to organize our own life, the way it develops, depends entirely upon what we are able to do under the circumstances we are born into, things appear not to be so simple. We are not used or trained to think that our material existence, our religion, our everyday activities, and so on, are determined by the material conditions we are inserted in and what works at the individual level also works at a broader level, the collective level, that of society. Our normal inclination is not to think in terms of the "base" – the economy, therefore the mode of production – as determining the "superstructure". The latter being everything we might think of as pertaining, broadly speaking, to the field of culture. By culture here we may encompass politics, religion, laws, education, and so on. We have already had the opportunity of explaining that the intellectual productions, while commodities, can be considered as much "base" as any other commodity, but exerting , in the superstructure arena, a distinct as well as particular kind of influence. Thus, if things work this way, as we are inclined to believe they do, we assume that the creators of the works of art and literature are conditioned by the capitalist mode of production and therefore affected by the material circumstances they are integrated in, which is to say that the human condition is bound to change depending on the given circumstances.

The literary works we read or the paintings we enjoy looking at are thus not the products of free, liberated, independent minds, as we tend to assume they are. They do not really originate in self-governing mental ground. Art and literature are thus reflections of the state of evolution of the productive forces hence the cultural products, the cultural outcome, are far from being autonomous realities. It seems they are always conditioned by the socioeconomic, political and historical environment. According to this assumption, we can safely assume that art in general and literature in particular are not independent bodies. Both art and literature turn inevitably into political devices, whether they try and perpetuate the established order or, on the reverse, they try to defy it.

It would be of some use to help us reasoning about this precise question if we briefly went through Pierre Macherey's views about the literary work. He supports the idea that for a more thorough understanding of the literary text we should concentrate on breaking the

resistance of the text itself in order to achieve a less distorted view of what the political context and the current ideology really are. What is not said, those gaps which are not filled in, the silences are more eloquent and tell us more than what really is said, "the book is not self-sufficient; it is necessarily accompanied by a certain absence, without which it would not exist", (Macherey, 1978, p.155) he argues. A couple of years later, Catherine Belsey, getting hold of Pierre Macherey's views in her analysis of Sherlock Holmes, for example, came to the conclusion that women are hardly made to play a part in Conon Doyle's work. They seem to have been completely washed aside, excluded (Belsey, 1980, p.93). The fact that women are forgotten is but a manifestation of the political dispensation where their lives evolve and consequently of the current ideology that dictates that very exclusion, and ultimately their fate. Raymond Williams also speaks of literature as being the privileged way of changing social practices and also a way of cultural production, as literature mirrors cultural as well as social values of certain layers of the society and is the material expression of human experience (Williams, 1977, p.123).

Within the framework of the existing power relations, it seems that power is not quite uniformly distributed. In this regard, the capitalist mode of production, which is on the basis of our societies, has throughout the centuries imposed itself, and the grip a capitalist system holds on the agents together with the relations of domination are infinitely great, independently of the fact that they manifest themselves on the workers, women, homosexuals, on ethnic communities or any other social group.

"Base" (infrastructure) and "superstructure" are interrelated, thus the freedom and autonomy of creation are by all means conditioned, regardless of the place of creation, this is to say that thought cannot be independent of the material environment, as already asserted. Artists and writers can, through their productive activity, go against the current trend and change the course of events, or they may choose to support the system, but, whatever option they might choose, it will always be the outcome of a political decision.

Power relations are here a fundamental element for our reasoning, and literature, which finds its material function within the framework of the current power arrangements, works as an important political device to entail major changes.

1.2.2 Power relations

Power relations are, according to our way of envisaging our surrounding environment, and as we have been arguing so far, the most privileged ground for the creation as well as interpretation of literary texts. It is also true that a literary text "read and interpreted in different times and different places may also differ in meanings as well as in functions" (Brannigan, 1998, p.9). We tend to believe the vantage-point from which it is read will bring into it judgments and presuppositions only possible by the knowledge the passing of time has allowed, and the historical context, the social relations, the constraints, the tensions in the society as well as their outcome are certainly the cornerstones of their interpretation.

The ideological environment and the current discourses which inform our everyday life and practices come to influence those producing artistic or literary works, since all that has been absorbed by the artist, we believe, comes inevitably into his own work. The artist cannot entirely break loose. All that surrounds him will certainly become part of his work, therefore turning it always into a political device. In the case of literature, the literary work is always a relationship established between the writer and his environment, and we believe that that relationship is all the more important in the sense that it, one way or other, adds something to the understanding of that given environment. Literature is in the final analysis the material product of a particular culture, of particular historical and political conditions, always associated with the context within which its production takes place. Once the artistic production is related and, to a certain extent, depends upon the existing material conditions of the context within which it is achieved, from a materialist view point, it is itself not only a reflection of the current culture but it certainly contributes to the building up and making of that very culture.

Literature does play an important if not a vital role in what the solidification and creation of power relations within a culture is concerned. It lays bare the mechanisms that enable us to acknowledge the way the current ideology is at work, the intricate and indirect connections between the literary texts and the world depicted in them, how much it does influence the creators and how they either adjust themselves to the ideology of the establishment or rather how they try to escape it and build up new power relations, challenge the established arrangements and consider affairs within the production context.

The established order, be it religious, social, political or cultural will try, in turn, being thus challenged, to adjust itself to always new circumstances it has to be confronted with, without, nonetheless, ever losing its firm and strong control over the current state of affairs. And that control may so firmly be at work that it may seem insurmountable, as we have been arguing.

This idea is linked to the concept of ideology, or at least to a "certain" concept of ideology, since, as Terry Eagleton puts it, there are uncountable "definitions of ideology currently in circulation" (Eagleton, 1991, p.1). We have so far dealt with the issue of ideology in Marx's and Engels's perspective. Gramsci and Althusser also arrived at the conclusion that, obeying to a certain hegemonic logic, power exerts an influence on society which "penetrates deep into social and cultural codes and conventions" (Brannigan, 1998, p.27). Raymond Williams, while agreeing with this position, develops the idea still further considering that ideological hegemony consists of a complicated system of inner structures with its contradictions and change processes that ends up by severely "saturating the consciousness of a society" (Williams, 1980c, p.37).

In the topic dedicated to our "theoretical sources" we shall further develop the concept of ideology the way some of the theorists we selected, those we did find most inspiring, thus enabling us to acquire a more solid and consistent knowledge of the concept, which, since Marx has introduced it, has been the object of endless debate. Equally, in the

sub-chapter dedicated to "agency" we shall be dealing with the way the actors may challenge that domineering framework and find space to articulate their worries and misgivings.

1.3 History

We tend to believe that literature contributes to the understanding of history the same way history contributes to the understanding of literature; Jean Howard broaches four non-dissociable elements "Literature and history, text and context" (Howard, 1986, p.24), which seems to be a good starting point for the discussion of this issue. The theorists of New Historicism and Cultural Materialism interpret historical context getting hold of all sorts of texts, from religious to legal or literary texts, equally going through travel writings, and "they break down the simplistic distinction between literature and history and open up a complex dialogue between them" as John Braniggan (1998, p.3) puts it. We are to a great degree interested in their way of scrutinizing texts, and particularly, literary texts, for the purpose of the analysis within the framework of our research, as we shall be developing later.

1.3.1 The complex relationship between history and literature

We reckon that the influence of history on literature manifests itself on three main levels. The first level has to do with the author and how he comes to be conditioned by the historical moment he happens to be writing in and the use he intends to make of it to construct his own literary object.

The second level has to do with the text itself, how much of the historical events are, one way or other, reflected in the written text, and we are here referring to the historical events themselves, those that we can recognize from the history books, but also the elements in the text that we, through a thorough and careful analysis are able to detect, those "faultlines", as Alan Sinfield (quoted above) would call them, that make an alternative and dissident reading of the texts feasible. And, finally, one third level, which will deal with to what extent the elements provided by the literary text enable a more or less accurate knowledge of the historical epoch depicted.

From a materialist stand point, an ascendant movement may be considered, that is to say the influence that history has on literature, and a descendent movement which works the other way round, the influence that literature has upon history, and has to do with the impact of literature on the readers' community for a better understanding of the society, and the acquisition of the historical knowledge. We may almost say that, somehow, it also has a social function. We dare say, however, and here we are in disagreement with those who think that "only art that serves history rather than pleasure is valuable" (Eagleton, 2002, p.45), as Plekhanov would put it, that aesthetic aspects should be equated, and this does not necessarily have a pernicious effect on the understanding of society or history.

1.3.2 The writer and the historical context

In what concerns the first two levels considered, we defend the idea that literary texts are products which, conveniently worked upon, are liable to shed light onto the economy, culture, politics and society of a given historical moment. But it is also true that this fact will depend enormously on the author's choice of how much of his social, political, religious or any other kind of involvement, he decides to bring into his literary object. It is his responsibility to decide and make use of his lucidity and capability of analysis to sense and accept how much of his own material environment he voluntarily and consciously wants to bring into the text. But the interest of the literary work to the understanding of society does not, however, necessarily depend on the author's will. Approached in an adequate way, the literary text, or for that matter any other text, reflects the social, political or cultural conditions where the author himself is integrated regardless of his conscious will. How much the forces at work in the society either constrain or influence the producer of a literary piece is certainly interesting to analyse.

When dealing with "agency", we shall come back to the question of the constraints imposed upon the individual. It seems to us obvious that the authors' involvement in the current affairs of his time is an only too natural phenomenon, but we also believe that the writer's political commitment does not necessarily have to feature in his fiction. He may find it necessary to dive into history itself and integrate it into the literary works in order to supply a more thorough account of the reality depicted and better illuminate the details and contours of his characters' options and behaviours, or even to choose which side he, as agency, finds himself on at a certain moment of his own social or political intervention, without, however, betraying his political commitment.

As already stated, we believe literary texts are the direct result of particular historical as well as social contexts, and the direct result of the author's own, conscious or not, personal options, hence, one way or other, it will always be possible, through a thorough scrutiny to find those "faultlines", to remain with Sinfeld, which enable a more accurate recognition of the historical moment in question. Making use of Pierre Macherey's words, which happens to be the title of one of his essays, *The text says what it does not say* (Macherey, 1978), and the readers will have a role to play here, that of finding the "cracks in its façade" (Bertens, 2001, p.92) that may allow us, as readers, an alternative reading of the literary text.

1.3.3 The historian and the value of the literary text

As for the historian point of view, the literary work can be of use in the sense that it may supply that patch of history which is not part of the historical text, that is to say, the realm of sensitivity and feeling, of social, and to a lesser degree, community or familiar tensions, as Raymond Williams (1983a) so clearly illustrates in *Culture and Society* in his chapter on D.H. Lawrence

> "… the sense of quick relationship, which came to matter more than anything else. This was the positive result of the life of the family in a small house, where there were no such devices as separation of children and parents, as the sending away to schools or the handing over to servants or the relegation to nursery or play-room" (Williams, 1983a, p.206).

The literary work thus offers insights, sometimes of a very subjective nature, about the actual significance of the historical period it deals with. These insights, perceptions, feelings or intuitions are impossible to trace in a work of history, which, due to its very nature, it is not meant to supply. In a history work we look for a certain kind of truth, rather a factual truth, concrete and objective accuracy, while by reading a literary work what we are looking for is something different, truth also, maybe, but where all kinds of subjective elements can be incorporated. A good slice of life would certainly be missing if it were not for the novels of these writers, say that they may help us to take history one step further, they illustrate and document history thus clarifying the political, social, cultural and intellectual environment of a certain time which historical texts cannot provide.

As many theoreticians have remarked, the value of the literary work, the way it is interpreted by the writer will have across the times and generations different and distinct readings. The reading as well as comprehension and perception are different as different generations deal with the literary products, in such a way that those generations will come to have different views of history according to their own interpretation and even expectations. Literary texts as well as other types of texts are, as we have supported above, carriers of politics, mirrors of the social, intellectual and political confrontations where the historical contexts can be traced. The historical, cultural and social environment determines what is written, we tend to believe.

Unlike the liberal humanist's approach, which is focused on the development of the character, on the development of the individual, as if that development were produced by means of some kind of inner and spontaneous force therefore centring on the characters as free agents while at the same time disregarding and refusing to pay attention to the cultural and historical context in which they are inserted. We believe that the writer will bring into his work the atmosphere of an epoch, the historical and cultural elements of his own time, and will pass on to the reader his own judgment, even if it is not his deliberate wish, as seen above, he will bring into his work his own objectivity, his own hopes or lack of them, a bright outlook or a dark one and sometimes a cry and an endless longing for the resolution of the current political, social or intellectual concerns. This is also a way of making history, or, to put it in more precise terms, of revealing history.

Furthermore, it is possible to read in the present about the past and find in those works coinciding and familiar elements, depending on how we experience reality, the use we are capable of making of them, and the relevance we want those past issues to assume in our present epoch. It is the writers' task to understand and define what, in his time, is relevant to convey for he is the one who possesses that sharp perception about his environment, be it political, cultural, social or economic. As argued before, the decision is his, no matter

whatever his will might be. Literary works are thus embodied by ideology in some way, and it seems their authors are somehow entrapped in a net of invisible constraints, in such a way that they cannot have the full control of their production. Whatever is said, or not said, will help the attentive reader to interpret, and, certainly, according to his own life and experience to discern.

We argue that literary works are always political, and unlike the formalist judgment, we support the idea that literature is not "a discrete, apolitical and transcendent form of artistic expression" (Brannigan, 1998, p.4). Not only is it not transcendent but it also has its effects on history the same way history has its effects on literature. Literature, we believe, is always a political device since it, either consciously or unconsciously, supports the prevalent ideology, or, on the contrary, fights it. Whether the writer chooses one way or other, his position will necessarily be a political one.

1.4 Agency

In order to debate the issue of agency, and its role in the current state of affairs, we chose to make clear the differences between two recognised theories which deal with the matter and thence try and draw our own conclusions as well as conceptualize our own views.

It seems clear to us that there is a considerable difference between what we can call the British and the French thought. The British theoreticians, of a Marxist or non-Marxist inspiration, i.e. Raymond Williams or Anthony Giddens respectively, have throughout attached a considerable importance to the role of human agency as a means of changing society and therefore contribute to alter the current social, political and cultural environment, namely creating room for the settlement of subcultures. On the other hand, the French theoreticians, in a general way, have displayed a more pessimistic outlook as for the possibilities of change by means of the agent's action, thus relegating the role of agency to its minimum significance. We may here refer to Louis Althusser with his concept of a whole constraining "ideology", to Michel Foucault and his idea of a whole limiting "power" or Pierre Bourdieu (1994) with his elaborate "Theory of Practice".

Under the sub-chapter "Theoretical Sources", of this work, we shall allow more room to develop Louis Althusser's theory of ideology and will also briefly argue about Foucalt's similar idea of power, the same way that we shall be dealing with Antonio Gramsci who, when elaborating on the question of hegemony, provides us with a much brighter outlook on the matter than the French theoreticians.

Still in the same sub-chapter, some ground will be granted to the British thinkers, namely Raymond Williams, as source of inspiration for the younger academics Alan Sinfield and Jonathan Dollimore (1985), the founders of Cultural Materialism. In so doing, we now allow ourselves to deal with two theoreticians of our choice for whom the issues of structure and human agency are of the utmost importance and have throughout been source of intense, fruitful and lively debate.

In this particular instance we chose to deal with the British academic Anthony Giddens (1984) and his "Structuration Theory" on the one hand, and Pierre Bourdieu's "theory of practice" on the other. Having their views as a starting point, we shall try and express our own ideas on the subject, since while dealing with writers and literary texts it seems of paramount significance the former's role and his intellectual production as a means for change.

1.4.1 Anthony Giddens's "Structuration Theory"

Anthony Giddens (1984), in his "Structuration Theory", takes structure and agency as being both part of the same and single unit, just joined together by means of practice. As conceptualized by the British thinker, social structures are brought forth by the agents the same way that they are developed and reproduced by them. Considering that a structure is a pattern of behaviour between a set of distinguishable units that, however stable, is liable to change; it is the repetition of that same pattern that thus gives rise to new circumstances in which the pattern is developed hence becoming part of the structuration process.

For Anthony Giddens, both practice and structure, as broached before, are part of the structuration process and irrevocably linked together, so that he prefers to refer to them rather as "structured practices". These patterns repeat themselves bringing forth patterns of conduct which will last through time.

Two other elements are also to be considered in Giddens's conceptualization: those of "rules" and "resources" (Giddens, 1984, p.21). "Rules", according to him, are "generalised procedures applied in the enactment/reproduction of social life" (1984, p.21), which are, on their turn "procedural" and "moral rules". The former has to do with social practices and the manner they are enacted by the individual, whilst the latter deal with the boundaries of action and interaction in the social arena. As for "resources", he considers both "material" and "authority resources". If "material resources" are connected with what one is in possession of, "authority resources" are rather linked to factors such as political power or capital (Giddens, 1984, p.21), and again not dissociated from the social rules in force. As Giddens puts it, resources are "structured properties of social systems, drawn upon and reproduced by knowledgeable agents in the course of interaction" (Giddens, 1984, p.15). Everyone moving in the society is, by principle, supposed to know what his place is and what and how his behaviour should evolve in a specific situation he is faced with.

According to Giddens, structures are immaterial; their existence dwells in the individual's sphere of mind thus commanding and, at the same time, determining his conduct. Their existence is materialized but in the agents' activities. It is precisely here that "praxis" comes forth. In his *Social Theory and Modern Sociology*, he elaborates on the "stratification model of the agent" considering that "praxis" is linked together with "motivation", "rationalization of the action" and the "reflexive monitoring of the action" (Giddens, 1987, p.21). "Motivation", the first of these three components, is essential for the individual/agent to perform the action, independently of the fact that he is conscious of such move.

Then follows the "rationalisation of the action", very much linked to the agent's own choices, which will be made according to his own priorities, that is to say "hierarchy of purposes", and here the agents perform their actions while not in complete possession of information about the context they are to be developed in, to which Giddens chose to call "acknowledged conditions of action" or rather "unacknowledged conditions of action" whenever there are uncontrollable elements within the context of action. As for the result of the agent's actions, Giddens argues in terms of "intended consequences of action", or "unintended" when the results cannot be predicted in advance. Finally, the way the action is performed according to the agent's own interpretation, he called the "reflexive monitoring of action" (Parker, 2000, pp.83-84).

For the British academic, the agent possesses what he calls a "practical consciousness" and a "discursive consciousness". The former dictates the mechanisms which enable the agent to conform to his social context and to preserve everyday tasks and routines, while the latter refers to the rational and articulated manner with which such tasks and routines are approached and, still according to A. Giddens, the latter is a form of "reflexivity" which happens not to be a common one (Giddens, 1979, p.72).

Anthony Giddens thus allows the agent a prominent role as far as his options, decisions and choices are concerned. Unlike Bourdieu, Giddens, while developing his "structuration theory", is inclined to consider the agent as "reflexive" and able to be in control and respond to the various situations he is confronted with while acting in a social context, regardless of the constraints and impediments arising from social structures. The "voluntaristic" nature of his thought has been the object of much discussion and also criticism, namely by more sceptical, and we dare say less liberal, thinkers.

The fact that "structure is not to be equated with constraint but is always both constraining and enabling" makes him essentially optimistic regarding the role of the agent and his ability to make choices and control their outcomes, since he considers that constraints of a social nature and external to the agent are not decisive elements in the latter's choices, on the reverse, they may even be enabling. And, after all, for him, structures have no palpable existence. Structures only exist as "memory traces" thus "orienting the conduct of knowledgeable human agents and as the instantiation of rules in the situated activities of agents" (Giddens, 1984, p.17). Here is how he summarises his reasoning "structure, as recursively organised sets of rules and resources, is out of time and space, save in its instantiations and co-ordination as memory traces, and is marked by an 'absence of subject'" (Giddens, 1984, p.25). According to him: "the social systems in which structure is recursively implicated, compromise the situated activities of human agents, reproduced across time and space" (1984, p.25).

As suggested above, and unlike Bourdieu, to whom the social constraints are of a tangible kind, Giddens asserts that "at any phase in any given sequence of conduct, any given agent could have acted in a manner somewhat different than she did" (Giddens, 1984, p.15). The question now arises that if the agent is left with freedom of choice and, as a "reflexive"

being, he is in possession of abilities and skills to be in full command of his own actions, the outcome of his actions should be perfectly under control in such a way that their outcome should always be the desirable one, therefore always positive. Although he speaks of "unintended consequences" the whole issue is not thoroughly convincing. When not considering the constraints posed by the context where the actions evolve, it seems rather difficult to explain the lack of success of the agent and the dire situations he sometimes finds himself in, which points to the fact that the agent's power and resources are not the same in every case. Letting aside the limiting properties of structure, and totally relying on the agent – consciousness, motivations, abilities, skills – he places himself on the opposite ground Bourdieu treads on.

1.4.2 Pierre Bourdieu's "Theory of Practice"

Pierre Bourdieu, very much in line with other contemporary French theoreticians, i.e. Michel Foucault, Pierre Macherey or Louis Althusser, in his "theory of practice" (Bourdieu, 1994) holds a much more sceptical view regarding the role of agency, and, opposing the "voluntaristic nature" of Giddens's thought, he presents a certain "determinism" which makes him rather pessimistic thus contrasting with his British counterpart. He develops his theory around three main concepts which he came to call "habitus", "fields" and "capital".

Let us now move to the notion of "habitus", the way he conceptualizes it. It has to do with "a system of generated dispositions integrating past experiences, which functions at every moment in a matrix of perceptions, appreciations and actions and makes possible the achievement of infinitely diversified tasks" (Bourdieu, 1994, p.83). So, as we understand it, Bourdieu's concept of "habitus" is related to the individual's past experience, to his acquired mental structures, which he absorbs, repeats and uses according to the various social circumstances when interacting with his fellowmen in specific "fields". For Bourdieu, "the conditionings associated with a particular class of conditions of existence" (Bourdieu, 1994, p. 53) are fundamental since each individual's life evolves in particular and specific ways, "habitus" being then determined by that same course, how the individual was brought up, who he socialises with, what position he occupies in the social scale, and so on. The agent/individual field is thus the product of his own social environment. To the latter, Bourdieu chose to call "field", the social environment where power relations are at work and where competition for the available resources takes place, characterized by a permanent struggle in every direction, in every "field" of action, in order to attain the various types of resources, or "capital".

For Bourdieu, "capital" is what comes to have exchange value in the diverse "fields" of society. As we understand it, for Bourdieu, "capital" is whatever exists which is or can become appealing and of value. The term "capital", according to the French academic, does not apply only to the economy, as conceptualized by Karl Marx, but he also considers the "cultural", the "symbolic" and the "social capital", thus getting hold of non-materialistic elements, which are nonetheless also important "fields" where the struggle takes place and

where the agent entails a series of actions envisaging the improvement of his own position in the social arena. So, all the three elements considered by Bourdieu seem to work in perfect connection, as expressed in his *Sociology in Question*, Habitus and Capital plus Field, equals practice. Here is the equation the way he presents it: [(habitus) (capital)] + field = Practice (Bourdieu, 1994, pp.68-69).The action entailed by the agent is very much linked to his own past experiences which developed into habits where his own capital (abilities, skills, personal resources) is used and exercised within fields, aiming to attain specific objectives.

While trying an explanation which seems acceptable and at the same time intelligible for Pierre Bourdieu's "theory of practice", we found it of great help to borrow some of C. Dyke's ideas and reasoning on the matter. So, Dyke elaborates on the concept of "habitus" as a twofold concept: "structured structures" and "structuring structures". The former consists of habits which lead the agent into action within a specific field, while the latter is accountable for the passing on of habits and practices to the generation that follows (Dyke, 1999, p.211). Thus habits, according to Bourdieu, are the main responsible elements for social continuity since the practices tend to be repeated throughout time, which makes it at the same time structure and also agency. Hence, as argued, the agent's action tends to originate in his own past experiences regardless of the external conditions, interactions, relationships or power to communicate, turning the role of the individual/agent basically inactive, and rather mechanic. And here is a fundamental difference between the French and the British theoreticians. Whereas Bourdieu sees structures as independent of agents, Giddens sees them as inseparable of the agents' action – therefore practice. "Habitus" appears for Bourdieu as a constraining and deterministic element, and he pays little attention to the fact that habits may change over time thus tending to modify the existing structures and therefore the individual's life. He appears somehow sceptical as regarding the role of the agent since he considers the agent as primarily self-centred and therefore motivated only by the wish to attain status and set objectives within the field his action evolves. As he assumes that the agent is essentially passive and leaves no ground for social mutations, since the tendency is that habits repeat themselves over and over, interaction and communication practices entailed by the agent are not in any way considered as abilities leading to social change. This rather deterministic view implies noticeable pessimism as far as the possibilities of agency are concerned.

It is also true that Pierre Bourdieu considers "reflexivity" as well as "voluntarism" as qualities of the agent, but he esteems the limitations and constraints that regulate the agent's options within the latter's surrounding environment as possessing a much superior weight. It is, as it were, that the agent is totally and definitely constrained by his background, very much the way K. Marx conceptualised it.

It seems to us that some kind of balance should be found between Anthony Giddens's "voluntaristic" idea of human agency and Pierre Bourdieu's "deterministic" and sceptical views.

1.4.3 Our perspective – a possible operative synthesis

In order to find the balance needed between the two lines of thought, we shall now try and reason about the question of the ideological constraints and ideological discourses which, when dealing with artistic production and its creators, introduce an important and interesting debate when arguing about the role of the writer and what his position should be. The whole question is not in any way different from what we have been arguing till now when dealing with the two different trends Giddens's "structuration theory", mostly relying upon the agent, and Bourdieu's "theory of practice".

The whole issue, we believe, is linked to the fact that the capitalist mode of production tends to reify the individuals, to turn them, one way or other, into objects, that throughout the historical process it has created the right conditions to contribute to the individuals' 'alienation'. We certainly do sympathise and understand Bourdieu's sceptical views, but, on the other hand, we tend to consider also those who are not deceived or, to be more precise, those who do not let themselves be deceived by the impositions of the political, economic or social dispensation they find themselves in. Those are the ones who read that same context in a different way, and therefore try and put in question what is given and presented to them as the most natural truth, those who, one way or another, try to question the inequities of the society, to put it under constant scrutiny, and by way of their action try to change the state of affairs that surrounds them. But, while respecting and trying to understand the French theoreticians on their sceptical views regarding the agent's abilities to change the course of affairs, we allow ourselves to share with the English contemporary thinkers a much brighter attitude as far as this issue is concerned. Thus, we tend to believe, whatever the dominant culture, human practices, human strength or human objectives will ever be exhausted, thus sharing with Raymond Williams (1977) a somehow more hopeful view on the role of agency as a means to change society.

Perhaps, this may be considered an overoptimistic view of dealing with ideological constraints, and the desire to put the established order under insistent and constant pressure may be pushed too far. But it does seem strange to us to what extent it is acceptable, admissible or even thinkable that we can all live in a state of "false consciousness" (Marx, 1973), and see the world the way we want to see it, misrepresented (for it is here a question of representation), and be totally blind and unaware to the way the society around us is being run, which ultimately will lead us into deceiving ourselves.

We do, however, refuse to accept this situation as if it were simple fate. We assume that the individuals will not necessarily have to be helpless victims, and will always have a way out, an escape to lead them into fighting their way through, into resisting and changing the power arrangements and the power structure they are in. There will always be some room left, some margin, no matter how frail it may possibly be, for agency. Whether or not it is possible to thoroughly escape the society's constraints and the dominant power's all pervasive net is a different question, and our answer to this question would probably be "no",

it is not possible to turn the course of affairs totally to our own side, but better and more convenient arrangements must be sought for. The plausibility of political, social and cultural transformation lies upon the result of this battle and how it is fought. So the outcome will be.

Literature supplies the writers with privileged means for trying and reshaping the evolution and progress of culture, since they more competently can bring into the open the past or current contradictions and intricacies present in the social, political or cultural tissue. We share with Raymond Williams also the idea that writers possess the "cultural capital" (*à la* Bourdieu) necessary to serve that purpose (Williams, 1977, pp.123-124). It seems clear that the established social order creates the right conditions and presents too many contradictions in a way that individual agency, the writer, may take advantage of the imperfection of the establishment. Once there is a possibility, no matter how remote that possibility may be, "cracks" can always arise, that, one way or other, are characteristic of any culture, and one can always see through and use that margin of dissidence and resistance. We shall keep our arguments for later.

Although assuming from the outset that materiality is at the origin of all ideas and naturally of new ideas, a new idea which by its nature challenges the established order seems not to have automatic or immediate consequences upon the material life – its fate is to be ostracized, marginalized, even ridiculed. Across the times that idea tends to gradually socialize itself to the extent that at a certain point it is indeed materialized. The makers of such materialization are the actors, the agency. It is also true that the agents will try and bring forth alternative proposals of social organisation, but we are also aware that there are limitations and constraints to carry out such proposals. Within the space left vacant by the power structure and its nets, it is the agency, the actors that will strive to find alternative ways to impose new arrangements, other than those of the dominant class. Something must however be kept in mind – the dominant class itself is composed of actors who, on their turn, also try to recycle themselves and find new modes to carry on their most convenient arrangements. It is then under these circumstances that the power relations manifest themselves.

While trying to socialize a new alternative idea, to insist upon the arguments and carry them through, at a certain point of the path a subculture, against all odds, settles itself and hopefully turns into the current culture. Without the active part played by agency in this changing progress, that subculture would never be liable to be materialized. At the level of the various types of militancy, great and important progress has been made; such is the case of feminist, homosexual or racial causes.

Although we display an optimistic view regarding the role of agency, we are far from being "voluntaristic", or thoroughly follow Giddens's views on the question of the agents' action, since, as stated from the beginning of our reasoning, we take into serious account the society's constraints, limitations, and what seems to be its all-pervading power. The question is that action is needed in every field, and we do believe, unlike Bourdieu, that it may lead to better arrangements which will certainly favour neglected or excluded layers, as already

sustained. Very often the French theoreticians – we may name Althusser, Foucault or Bourdieu himself – were politically committed citizens; they also made use of the so called margin for dissidence and resistance.

1.5 Theoretical Sources – a development

We have chosen, as explained before, a materialist outset for the purpose of our present research. In the course of our work and in order to support our founding elements we most naturally could not escape the founders of historical materialism, Karl Marx and Friederich Engels, who elucidated us on the elementary concepts of "base" and "superstructure", those of "ideology" and "alienation", and mildly elaborated on the cause of literature and art, and to what degree they could fit their own formula.

We discussed in a fairly detailed manner under "Literature and Society" the unsatisfactory character of their explanation regarding those issues, not because they were incapable of providing a better and more convincing one, but, we believe, simply because of the fact that for them they were not considered primary issues. Therefore, and with the firm objective to find a more satisfactory debate we got hold, amongst others, of Terry Eagleton's works on Marxism and Literature and also on the debate of Ideology. His insights on the question of "ideology" seem to run the whole of our reasoning while trying to elaborate on issues such as culture, literature, political militancy or power relations. We therefore found it necessary to merge into some of Marx's revisers, already from a vantage-point, and therefore without the prejudices attached to such definition as "revisers". We shall start by Louis Althusser and his concept of "ideology", moving next to Gramsci and his notion of "hegemony" and further to Raymond Williams who, himself, while still faithful to the '"base-superstructure" concept, to which he dedicated much of his work, had a more Gramscian outlook. Raymond Williams has also been for us a source of ideas, and ground for reflection on the questions of literature, art and culture. His works are extremely helpful to shed light onto some complicated issues which feature our cultural system. Williams came to coin the term "Cultural Materialism" based on a materialist outlook of societal development which has been further developed by some British academics, namely by Alan Sinfield, Jonathan Dollimore and Catherine Belsey, who still continue to publish work always following the same trend in an attempt to lay bare the constraining mechanisms of the capitalist system. It seemed also, if not for other reasons, a question of justice to dedicate some of our attention to the cultural materialists counter partners across the ocean, in the USA, the New Historicists.

1.5.1 Materialism, its founders and revisers

For our analysis purposes, we are indebted to a vast number of thinkers, as stated above,. In the sub-chapter under the title "Materialism", we got hold of the Marx and Engels proposition of a "determining base and a determined superstructure", which Raymond

Williams, without however denying it, developed into "the social being determines consciousness" (Williams, 1980c, p.31). According to the author this assumption does not pose any kind of contradiction as far as the founders of historical materialism were concerned.

A few assumptions provided by the Marxist thought which will serve our understanding and reasoning about the artistic and literary production and how we can view or read it in the present should therefore be considered at this point.

When engaging in a reflection about "ideology" we shall keep in mind Terry Eagleton's assertion that states "the study of ideology is among other things an inquiry in the ways in which people may come to invest in their own unhappiness", and, he continues his argument by stating that "the most efficient oppressor is the one who persuades his underlings to love, desire and identify with his power…" (Eagleton, 1991, p.3). Eagleton's view is not so far apart from that of Louis Althusser's (1974), who, on his turn, was influenced by Pierre Macherey's (1978) views on literature and his idea of a whole pervasive ideology.

According to the British theoretician, we are all ultimately responsible for our own unhappiness and deception (Eagleton, 1991). As already argued in the sub-chapter on "Literature and Society", we all tend to view ourselves as free individuals, to think of ourselves as freethinkers, to imagine the writers we read or the artists in general as totally independent – that is divorced – from the socioeconomic environment and circumstances they develop their work in. Some of the thinkers we allowed our attention to will clarify this and other ideas as we shall try and demonstrate in our next topic.

1.5.2 Althusser's notion of Ideology

From an Althussarian view point, it is virtually impossible to escape ideology, and therefore any claims of freedom by agency are but delusive.

In an attempt to decode and rationalize the questioning of that freedom, Louis Althusser got hold of the intellectual Marxist perspective presented in the following quotation:

> "In the social production which men carry on they enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will; these relations of production correspond to a definite stage of development of their material powers of production. The same total of these relations of production constitute the economic structure of society – the real foundation on which rise legal and political superstructures and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production in material life determines the general character of the social, political and spiritual process of life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but, on the contrary, their social existence determines their consciousness." (Marx cited in Althusser, 1971, p.11)

Let us then move further to what Louis Althusser (1971) called ideology and the concept he came to develop. According to the French theoretician, in the capitalist system, and by means of the current mode of production, of distribution and consumption, which determines the way the world affairs are run, there is no room left for agency. Ideology here, for Althusser, and, for that matter, for most Marxists, refers to a distorted mode of conceiving our reality, to a 'false consciousness', to the misrepresentation of our world,

which makes people experience their lives in such a way that they end up by considering as 'normal' and 'natural' their position in the world and, according to the Marxist line of thought, such position is highly 'unnatural'. Althusser refers to the way the 'base' is organized, consequently determining and conditioning the whole of the cultural superstructure. This thought is also shared by other so-called "'Western'-Marxists" or "Neo-Marxists", to which Althusser himself belongs. So "ideology" is, broadly speaking, the cause of our misrepresentation of the world to our own selves. The existing class differences seem not to be object of much opposition by the members of the society, it became a matter of course and our tendency is to consider it as a natural assumption, notwithstanding the fact that we ought to strive for a living while some other classes live on the exploitation of our own labour does not pose any fundamental problem so as to make us move in order to act towards a change in the current socioeconomic or political arrangements. We may carry on living what seemingly may be considered a harmonious life, no matter how contradictory this really may be, and not only coexisting with the established state of affairs but also try, by way of a mimetic practice, to live as much as possible the way the ruling classes live, i.e. consuming brands or exercising similar social practices. Ideology thus represents "the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence" (Althusser, 1971, p.109).

According to Louis Althusser, the so-called "ideological State-apparatuses" and the way those apparatuses are worked upon by ideology – we are here referring to religion, educational system, law, various civil institutions, clubs, religious organizations, and so on -, is the keynote. For him, the "repressive State Apparatus functions 'by violence', whereas the Ideological State Apparatus functions 'by Ideology'" (Althusser, 1971, p.51) 'the material existence of an ideological apparatus' can manifest itself in the form of a small mass in a small church, a funeral, a minor match at a sports club, a school day, a political party meeting, etc.", and carries on "Ideology is a 'representation' of the imagery relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence" (Althusser, 1971, p.52).

Once for the French thinker "ideology" is directly related to social institutions, to material practices (school, parties, clubs, church, unions, and so on) we believe we can refer to his "ideology" as almost drawing a synonym with culture, since it does sweep all spheres of the civil society. Wherever one turns to one is bound to be touched or pervaded by the prevailing "ideology": "…ideology existing in a material ideological apparatus, prescribing material practices governed by a material ritual, which practices exist in the material actions of a subject, acting in all consciousness according to his belief" (Althusser, 1984, p.97). Althusser considers also the "various subject positions" we play in society as professionals, as family, as part of a political union, and so on, as well as the various ways we are thus "interpellated" according to the role we play in such a way that it makes us see ourselves as free minds and our lives as natural and harmonious. Althusser leaves thus very little room or no room at all for agency for, whether we want it or not, we are worked upon by the system and ultimately so dreadfully and definitely involved in it.

Let us then look into the way Althusser adapts his theory and makes it work also in the field of literary criticism, how objective and clear realism, for example, may turn into something that is totally its opposite. When the producers of the literary texts invite us, the readers, to take part in such a world, and in so doing create in us the illusion of freedom, of detachment, they may be pushing to us the responsibility of our own deception. Seen from this critical standpoint, Althusser appears to us as having an extremely pessimistic view, which is followed by Michel Foucault, as far as this question of ideology (power for the latter) is concerned: the actors will inescapably be worked upon, turned into defenceless victims of the system they happen to be in, so pervasive the ideology is that no space is left for dissidence, subversion or resistance. Everything is determined and conditioned by the current ideology.

Such deterministic, unhopeful and somehow dramatic approach has been questioned by many theoreticians throughout the twentieth century, especially by those of a Marxist matrix, who, like Raymond Williams and some of his followers, tried an all more inspiring approach, for in all contexts and historical periods there has always been room for dissent, room for action to pave a much more hopeful path.

In order to counterbalance this dramatic inescapable view of ideology, Raymond Williams used Antonio Gramsci's works and interpreted them in a benign and hopeful manner. Let us then look into what were Gramsci's views on the question of ideology, which he developed and came to call "hegemony".

1.5.3 Gramsci's notion of Hegemony[7]

Antonio Gramsci, who wrote in the 1930's, even if his works were neither published nor translated into English but until 1947, already supplied a more optimistic view of the world ahead. While fully aware of the role that ideology played in a capitalist society – it is worth noting that A. Gramsci was writing some decades earlier than his French counterparts, who developed his concept of "ideology" in the 1970's- and notwithstanding the difficult political conditions Italy was going through at the time (we are here referring to a war scenario which was underway), his view of the society was somehow more hopeful. Although he had fully understood the wrongdoings of the prevailing ideology, he tried to make a more optimistic reading of that same society and, somehow, developed a more reasonable vision of the burden all individual members of the society had to carry and were exposed to. He came to call it "hegemony".

Antonio Gramsci's "hegemony" proved to be a more manageable and a more approachable concept: "(…) men acquire consciousness of structural conflicts on the level of ideology" (Gramsci, 1971, p.365). If at the beginning of his studies on the matter he still thought in terms of hegemony meaning the political leadership of the working class, the way Marx and Engels had developed this very theoretical construct, he later developed it further

[7] For further reading Gramsci (1971, 1977)

to a very sharp analysis of the bourgeois values and how firmly fixed they were in the capitalist system in such a way that they became common sense.

Having this assumption as a standpoint, we are no victims but actors playing a crucial role in our own freedom, or lack of it. The capitalist mode of production then is, also for Gramsci, the "base", as for any other Marxist thinker, and therefore the dominant class exerts power and control over the working classes. So the bourgeoisie dominates the working classes primarily by economic means, but its domination is made acceptable, "natural", even logical, and therefore possesses all it needs to continue indefinitely, in such a way that the working classes tend to mingle their own wellbeing with that of the bourgeoisie, thus perpetuating the maintenance of the status quo. The bourgeois values being thus considered "natural" and "normal" by those subjected to the bourgeois rule, enables the ideology of the bourgeoisie to maintain the control of all classes, and to be successful in capturing their attention and gaining their support. The bourgeoisie, wishing to dominate, moves outside its own economic sphere of interests in order to better exert its power and grasp on the intellectual and moral fields, hence always trying to lead the process, possible alliances and compromises are thus established with a multitude of forces in the society. Gramsci came to call it "the historic bloc". No physical repression or coercive power seems to be necessary, it does work otherwise.

It is precisely this "bloc" (Gramsci, 1971, p.354) that forms a platform of consent in order to establish and maintain the desirable social order. The dominant class sets the rules, and those who strive to survive – and we are here speaking not only of the basic survival, but also of the struggle for dignity, for acceptance, for equality of rights, for the absence of discrimination, no matter which realm we are treading on, it will have to function within the boundaries of such impositions, and constraints using whatever possible margin of dissent there is. We can here recall Marx's concept of "des-alienation" where no one will have to be a defenceless victim, but, on the reverse, should embark in a process of resistance against "alienation".

According to Raymond Williams, who, as stated before, tended to have, and proved to have had, a much more Gramscian and for that matter also Marxist outlook as regarding the question of "alienation", considered: "hegemony… is a whole body of practices and expectations; our assignments of energy, our ordinary understanding of the nature of man and of his world", but not impossible to be fought against, not quite "waterproof", in his own words. And he extends his view a step further: "…its own internal structures are highly complex, and have continually to be renewed; recreated and defended… they can be continually challenged and modified" (Williams, 1980, p.22-23).

Individuals then, according to our understanding of the Italian thinker's concept, may explore the contradictions of the current discourses, to fight the so-called hegemony, and here artists, writers and creators in general are, more than anyone else, in the privileged position to face and challenge them. That challenge is more easily made visible and it is necessarily always political, since inevitably, one way or other, their action leads to power.

Our belief is that literature is a magnificent tool to achieve that goal and take advantage of that margin of liberty we are allowed within the system. We are here close to Williams' assumption that "literature is part of a system of culture which is constantly shifting rather than self-perpetuating 'great' tradition" (Brannigan, 1999, p.39). To corroborate this assertion we may here make use of Stephen Spender's words, referring to the feeling of insufficiency regarding his politically militant work, and conscious that his own margin could be used otherwise, i.e. by means of literature, he commented: "I still secretly and perhaps exaggeratedly believe that a very good book about things one cares for is a potent instrument. An imaginative work is more important than one more voice added to a controversial Babel" (Spender in Zeikowitz, 2008 p.7).

1.5.4 Cultural Materialism and the New Historicism

Assuming as valuable the idea that the artistic work inevitably leads to power, the literary work, having been produced in a certain context at the same time historical, economic as well as political, will also carry, by its inherent characteristics, the official discourse or a discourse of dissent. It is precisely this reading, this political understanding of the society depicted in the literary work, that we seek to achieve so that light is bound to be brought onto the current ideological discourses, the hegemonic context, the existing social, cultural, political or religious order, which desperately tries to re-arrange and adapt itself to the constantly changing circumstances, always adjusting its hegemonic discourse, re-inventing itself to come out later more powerful, without nonetheless letting go off its grip.

Following this line of thought, some literary works may seem, at a first approach, or a less careful reading, supportive of the inherent ideology in which they have been created. Cultural Materialists as well as New Historicists are bound to be of great help for the purpose of our analysis as their ideas and their analytical methods may potentiate a different and alternative reasoning and, in a way, supply what we consider convenient hints to set out our work on issues such as class, power relations, dominant ideology, imperialism, race, homosexuality or feminism.

Having, in the previous topic, briefly stated what the concept of "hegemony" is for Antonio Gramsci and also the understanding Raymond Williams had of it, we may now pass on to two current trends of literary criticism which, in some way, move within the same intellectual surroundings: the New Historicists and the Cultural Materialists. The New Historicists, in the United States, whose leading figures are Stephan Greenblatt and Catherine Gallegher, started somehow earlier and were immediately followed by the Cultural Materialists in Britain, who have as precursors Alan Sinfield and Jonathan Dollimore (1994).

They appeared as critical and dissident voices within very conservative political contexts, those of Ronald Reagan's United States of America and Margaret Thatcher's Britain, respectively. For reasons that we shall try to clarify, the Cultural Materialists, as Raymond Williams before them, have a more Gramscian view of "hegemony", since they really defend and are active in making use of their space of movement and freedom, that margin for agency

already mentioned, in their practice as professionals as well as concerned and committed citizens outside the academy. The New Historicists are committed academics; they use techniques of analysis very similar to their British counterparts but they do not share with the latter their optimistic outlook as far as the question of agency is concerned, as we shall try to make clear in the course of our work.

Both New Historicists and Cultural Materialists started their practices by studying Shakespearian texts in an attempt to find out how an alternative reading of them could make sense in our contemporary societies. Both trends support a dissident reading of texts whether recent texts or texts from the past, and we are convinced that such proposition poses a serious challenge to more conservative positions, and, by definition, more conservative critical practices.

It seems that it is only pertinent that some attention should be devoted to what Dollimore and Sinfeld have to say apropos Culture Materialism:

> "Cultural Materialism does not like much established criticism, attempt to mystify its perspective as the natural, obvious or right interpretation of an allegedly given textual fact. On the contrary, it registers its commitment to the transformation of a social order which exploits people on grounds of race, gender and class." (Dollimore and Sinfield, 1985, p.viii)

It is clear that this line of thought may be explored by certain layers of the society which feel their position in the contemporary society, and under these power arrangements, is not being respected or is object of discrimination be it social, political, of class or gender. It is thus easily discerning that this proposition seems to be most convenient, amongst others, for feminists, who have along the centuries fought for their own rights, and obviously for homosexuals, who have also been discriminated for centuries and have seen their basic rights denied, and gone through humiliating processes throughout history. The racial issue is also not to be neglected and has since long ago been in the Cultural Materialists agenda, once the question of discrimination works here too. So, for Cultural Materialists, to find points where transgression is important for helping contemporary political causes, and thus change the current state of affairs, is only desirable.

What we can see in Forster's *Maurice*, or in Wilde's own personal fate, are situations no more to be witnessed in Western contemporary societies, where gay marriage has already been permitted and gay and lesbian rights acknowledged to a great extent. This certainly confirms Sinfield's and Dollimore's idea that "culture is made continuously …" (Dollimore and Sinfield, 1985, p.viii) as stated before, thus acknowledging that challenging the status quo necessarily leads to shifting, and changes in the society and subcultures are enabled to find their way through within the current arrangements.

Both New Historicists and Cultural Materialists assume that the significance of a literary work depends upon the cultural environment in which it is produced, but can no doubt be applied to contemporary settings, according to the readings and understandings that we, from a vantage point, can reach out of it, and also the use we can make of it. The literary text – or even any other kind of text – is fertile ground to both notice and convey contradictions and

strains. In a literary text these contradictions as well as social and political strains existing in the society can be worked upon, scrutinized and developed.

The term "Cultural Materialism" was coined already in the 1980's by Raymond Williams, who explicitly described its modes of analytical practice as well as its procedures. By cultural materialism Williams referred to an intellectual tendency which had long made its way and determinedly focused its attention on social class issues.

Already back in the year 1957, Richard Hoggart was to publish *The Uses of Literacy* where he analysed the literary works as well as the cultural life of the working classes in Britain, to whom he held a sympathetic and benign feeling and attitude throughout his life and literary production. As for E. P. Thompson, as a social historian, he published in 1963 *The Making of the English Working Class*, thus calling attention to non-canonical issues, that is to say, to issues which were kept outside what was till then considered high culture – the life of the working classes (Drakakis, 2008). A class politics was later to be developed by Richard Hoggart himself, by Raymond Williams and Terry Eagleton, and the materialist apprehensions vis-à-vis the connection between what was "literary" and "non-literary" as far as the textual production was concerned were to be worked upon and extended to cultural production in a more general way.

Jonathon Dollimore's and Alan Sinfield's work, in Britain, in the 1970's, in the Cultural Materialists' way, focuses on the material conditions in which works are produced, and has the historical, social, political, and cultural circumstances as keynotes – and somehow in line with their counterparts in the United States of America, the New Historicists, the idea here is to exhaustively explore the possibility of analyses which may lead us into finding the "cracks in the ideological façade" (Bertens, 2001, p.92), those passages where the text is not in complete control of itself, as Pierre Macherey would put it, and try to minutely go through whatever texts there are in this way so as to be conscious of the multiple possibilities of dissent readings they offer. This is organised so that we are this way able to get acquainted with those who do reside on the social margins and thus lay open the ideological mechanisms at work in the society which insists on excluding, relegating or confining certain layers of that same society to an inferior social standing, and therefore perpetuating this state of affairs, this economic, social and political dispensation which favours the dominant class. Through this practice of analysis of literary texts we are bound to shed light onto them, which a more conservative and rather traditional humanist reading has not been able to accomplish.

The cultural materialists' outlook acknowledges the tangibility and pervasiveness of ideology in every field of action, no matter which, from school to university, to wherever the individual chooses to be and have his place of action. Literature may supply the means to convey that ideology, moreover, be at the service of that ideology, be it literary texts from the present or from the past but it may also be favourable ground to fight that all pervasive ideology. An example that best illustrates this is the merchandising of the literary works – representations of a tradition, of a past, which may and certainly does serve contemporary ideology – is the proliferation of films made out of literary works, from Shakespeare to Henry

James or to E. M. Forster, whose major novels have successfully, according to the market standards, been made into films. This practice came to be pompously called "heritage industry" (Landy, 2007, p.235). The concept of "heritage industry" thoroughly fulfils and follows all the market rules of a market economy for it is itself also part of the capitalist system where it has risen.

One parenthesis however should be made at this point to manifest our understanding and even sympathy concerning E.M. Forster when he so clearly demonstrated his reluctance as regards having his works being used that way, he never trusted anyone on that matter:

> "Now for the film. I fear my answer must be a paregoric NO. As I told XX Century Fox when they were rushing after *A Room with a View* in 1947. I like films, I like novels but don't believe that a novel can be turned into a film without transforming its character (…) With the film industry as at present constituted, I don't see an author can be guaranteed to have the last word. I am sad about the films…" (Forster in Zeikowitz, 2008, p.148).

Christopher Isherwood had vis-à-vis this precise issue a different understanding, and as for his books being turned into films he seemed to have had a much more pragmatic sort of attitude. If the market wants to sell, let it sell, if the industry thinks it advisable for the sake of audiences to include a love story in the film *Cabaret*, released in 1972, out of *Goodbye to Berlin*, then let them do it, as long as the work becomes known, and therefore reaches a much vaster audience which otherwise he would not dream of reaching. This pragmatic attitude, we believe, has to do with the fact that there were more important issues at stake, he might have been more concerned about what he really had to say, ideas to convey he thought more important than bending a little before the contemporary market laws. In the game to be played he thought himself better off, thus confirming, to a great extent, what the Portuguese scholar, Mário Jorge Torres had to say about the issue of adaptation: "Adaptar significa saber que lidamos com discursos diversos, até opostos" and carries on "uma boa adaptação será a que serve, de forma eficaz, o texto de chegada" (Torres, 2009, p.16), and Isherwood knew it.

The use of these texts takes its material form in contemporary ideology, and may be it would be interesting mentioning here the film *A Single Man*, based upon the 1964 Isherwood's novel bearing the same title, released in 2010. Its effect also serves the contemporary tendency; it is *l'air du temps* now. It does then appear as a matter of course, now that the modern trend is to debate and have gender issues on the political agenda of the political parties, where parliamentary laws have been passed and keep being approved in various Western countries, confirming what we have been arguing about breaking through a powerful ideological apparatus, with success, so confirming that a margin for dissent is possible. This is an issue we shall come back to and deal with in more detail at a later stage.

According to the cultural materialists' line of thought, no issue is to be excluded from our scrutiny - homosexuality, sexuality in a broader sense, feminism, lesbianism, class, colonization, imperialism, colonialism, pacifism and so on, with the express goal of providing an alternative understanding of our society's prevalent arrangements.

If "cultural materialism privileges power relations as the most important context for interpreting texts" (Brannigan, 1998, p.9), by looking at literary works this way the intention is to broaden and envisage the literary text, and, for that matter, other forms of art, in a much broader cultural context, for these are inevitably placed within the kind of discourse that contains and tries to maintain the established social order. So, literary texts are to be worked upon and put in perspective in what concerns the contemporary existing power relations. The cultural materialists' assumption is thus that literature, together with any kind of artistic production, plays a cultural role in the sense that it is capable of shaping the experiences of those who, one way or other, get acquainted with it. Culture, they believe, is therefore a process rather than a finished product, and cultural materialists, according to A. Sinfield:

> "(…) investigate the historical conditions in which textual representations are produced, circulated and received. They engage with questions about the relations between dominant and subordinate cultures… the scope for subaltern resistance, and the mode through which the system tends to accommodate or repel diverse kinds of dissidence[8]. In this approach, the terms 'art' and 'literature' … are neither spontaneous nor innocent. They are strategies for conferring authority upon certain representations, and hence upon certain viewpoints." (Sinfield, 1997, p.xxiii)[9]

The cultural materialists' interest in expanding their influence outside the academy is but a proof of their militancy. Sinfield speaks of "a preferred alternative" when faced with professionalism in academic terms and defends that intellectual work should be developed within the realm of "dissident subcultures", which is to say of "class, ethnicity, gender and sexuality" (Sinfield, 1992, p.294). Also later in his *Literature, Politics and Culture in Post-war Britain* (1997), Sinfield asserts that "the best chance for literary and leftist intellectuals to make themselves useful is to commit themselves to a subcultural constituency" (Sinfield, 1997, p.xxiv). Cultural materialists thus defend, amongst other issues, that there is a role to be played for example in what concerns the theatre programmes, the plays to be exhibited or the kind of texts to be passed on to children at school. The New Historicists, in turn, do not aim to reach that stage of commitment since they do not share with the Cultural Materialists the Gramscian view that there is a margin of dissent worth being used. They do not believe in it. Although Stephan Greenblatt acknowledges the influence Raymond Williams, whose lectures he attended at Cambridge University in the late 60's, had in his outlook on cultural

[8] Henrik Ibsen's example is paradigmatic and competently corroborates what Sinfeld tries to convey: developing his activity as a playwright in the second half of the nineteenth century, he is considered the precursor of Modern Drama and thought to have contributed to bring change regarding the outlook on women in a general way. Ibsen dared to challenge the 'mœurs' of his day. He dared in fact to put in question the strict and stern morals of family life with all its hypocrisies even though maintaining the façade. He searched for truth and, especially in his so called 'social plays' of which *A Doll's House* (1979), *Rosmersholm* (1886), *The Lady from the Sea* (1888) or *Hedda Gabler* (1890) were just examples of plays where the role of women was not conventional and countermanded all the societal established patterns for them. He created his women independent beings and owners of their own will thus pursuing their own path. Henrik Ibsen's theatrical texts thus shed the brightest of lights concerning the life of women in his time.

[9] For more information, one should get acquainted with more extensive extracts, reading the introduction to Sinfield's *Literature Politics and Culture in Post-war Britain* (1997, pp: 26-27, pp. 31-35).

issues and the way he envisages the world, he also acknowledges the influence of Michel Foucault, from whom he acquired a grimmer outlook. Greenblatt admits that the frequent visits the French theoretician paid to Berkeley University, where Greenblatt was a professor, "helped him to shape" his practice as a literary critic as he states in his *Learning to Curse: essays in early modern culture* (Greenblatt, 1990, pp.146-147).

As regards the "theoretical question as to the subversive potential of apparently subversive texts" (Milner, 2002, p.154), some considerations should be made for it is exactly the way Foucault comes to be read and interpreted "whether as a theorist of incorporation or of disruption, and on how to understand in/subordination, whether as always – already necessarily contained or as at least potentially resistive" (pp.154-155) that the differences between New Historicists and Cultural Materialists arise. Certainly for the New Historicists and for Greenblatt in particular, who, as seen before, recognises his Foucauldian influences. Resistive action is, according to him, of no use since we live within this "entrapment model", which is simultaneously Althusserian, to do with ideology, and Foucauldian, to do with power, and therefore inescapable. According to Foucault, "Power is everywhere, not because it embraces everything but because it comes from everywhere" (Foucault, 1988, p.93); this is very similar to Althusser's own concept of ideology.

The New Historicists are concerned about the fact that we all police and regulate our desires and constraints, which as a result reduces or even eliminates the necessity for the established power to exert repression. As long as the ideological apparatus is full at work, the outcome is likely to be the reproduction of hegemonic practices. Subversion may be possible but it does not produce any positive result since it implies that the power of the status quo needs it to settle and maintain itself. So, ultimately, subversion favours the institutionalized power allowing it the possibility of becoming visible, and therefore justifying itself. The New Historicists consider also the various forms power may assume and are concerned about identifying and exposing them throughout the different historical periods, the similarities and repetitions, without, nonetheless, discarding their sceptical view about the agency's possibility of resistance or, as they call it, subversion.

Both New Historicists and Cultural Materialists agree that power relations is undoubtedly the most favourable arena to develop their work, but while Stephan Greenblat believes that "entrapment" is crucial to theorise over the prevailing ideology, Alan Sinfield finds it more important to theorise over the possible margin for real dissidence, and seeks support in Williams by stating that "this centrally is what Raymond Williams was concerned with in his later work" (Sinfield, 1994, p.24). It seems that Sienfield, as Williams before him, refuses to accept that no margin for effective dissidence is left, and countermands this pessimistic view arguing on his turn that all is but a misinterpretation of Foucault, who himself was "a committed and active leftist" (Sinfield, 1994, p.24) thus justifying the paradox. Reading both, Althusser or Foucault all amounts to the possibilities and limits of dissent potential.

While Stephan Greenblatt insists on how apparently subversive texts are in the final analysis affirmative of "a complicit with the dominant discursive formation" (Milner, 2002, p.154), Alan Sinfield broaches that "dissident potential derives from conflict and contradiction that the social order inevitably produces within itself, even as it attempts to sustain itself" (Sinfield, 1992, p.41). Sinfield is aware that "there is no simple way through but every reason to go on trying" (Sinfield, 1994, p.27). Sinfield and Dollimore persistently contend that cultural materialists are committed to the "transformation of the entire social order", on her turn Catherine Gallegher speaks of New Historicism as "a criticism whose politics … are difficult to specify" (Gallegher, 1996, p.45). For the New Historicists, the relevance of the current political situations where they first developed their activity, in the 1970's during Reagan's administration, was but implicit; for Cultural Materialists, the same period, which corresponds to Thatcherism in Britain, was overtly explicit, and thus a material function for texts, both of the present and the past, has been found to play a part within the contemporary power institutions.

By thoroughly analysing literary texts, the New Historicists are convinced that power relations are made obvious and gain relevance. It is important to refer again the fact that both trends started their work by analysing English Renaissance texts, mainly Shakespeare's plays, and both managed to find in such texts those "faultlines", that Alan Sinfield refers to, which enabled a non-canonical reading of those works, and were both able to find and bring about contradictions, fears, impositions and constraints which otherwise would not be visible. The literary works or public performances were, in their view, disturbing products of the then current ideology and could lead to dire effects as far as the institutionalized power was concerned.

Both, New Historicists as well as Cultural Materialists, deny the author the full claim of individual genius, sharing this view with Williams, since his work is not autonomous from the historical context of its production, therefore leaving to the author only the partial command of his own work. It is part of a larger economic, political, cultural and social establishment. It does actively participate in the construction as well as consolidation of the ideological discourses, be it at a micro or macro level. The author seems to be the instrument through which his work evolves and expresses the profound forces within the society, for example class differences. As Stephen Greenblatt explains, "the work of art is a product of a negotiation between a creator or class of creators, equipped with a complex, communally shared repertoire of conventions, and the institutions and practices of society" (Greenblatt, 1989, p.12).

In order to help us analyse a literary text the way proposed by both trends, let us remain with Stephen Greenblatt for it is worth it to examine his propositions, in the form of questions, regarding the literary text, and this way produce enlightening criticism towards a contribution for an alternative reading and thus an alternative understanding of the writers we intend to study:

"1. What kinds of behaviour, what models of practice, does this work seem to enforce?
2. Why might readers at a particular time find this work compelling?
3. Are there differences between my values and the values implicit in the work I am reading?
4. Upon what social understandings does the work depend?
5. Whose freedom of thought or movement might be constrained implicitly or explicitly by this work?
6. What are the larger social structures with which these particular acts of praise or blame [that is], the text's apparent ethical orientation] might be connected."

(Greenblatt, 1995, p.226)

CHAPTER 2

Small Rooms with a View: About Forster's Loose Essays

2 About Forster's loose texts

In this chapter we shall deal with some of Forster's essays with the purpose of placing Forster in the political scene of his time, and showing how politics, rather than being somewhat apart from the individual's life, were intrinsically part of it therefore fuelling his concerns and apprehensions. He never lost sight of the problems of his time, participated in them one way or another, and he was by no means ever distracted from the surrounding reality. The texts we chose to work on were produced at different moments of his long life and bear the marks of the current time, according to the urgency he reckoned necessary, and it is thus they should be judged - as one more grain to be added towards the achievement of some sort of reasoning in the path to the shaping of a better world, with less suffering, and also as his contribution, the one that was accessible to him – his writing. In short, small rooms with an open view to the world.

In all the essays selected as a sample to support our argument concerning, in our perspective, the political Forster, as opposed to Zeikowitz' perspective of an 'apolitical' Forster, there is one constant element which should be taken into account – the pertinence of the writer's chosen issues according to the historical moment of production. Let us take for instance *Our Graves in Gallipolli,* when the wounds of the First world War were still to be healed and still a matter of much demagogy in home politics; or *A Menace to Freedom*, written in 1935, on the eve of the Spanish Civil War, which was to threaten the existing European democracies, or his 1939 text *Racial Exercise*, when what was at stake was Hitler's persistent racial paranoia whose dire consequences are now widely known, just to mention a few included in our selection.

Our Graves in Gallipolli, written in 1923, and also *Liberty in England* a text he produced for his participation in the International Writers Congress, in 1935, were taken from *Abinger Harvest*, a volume first published in 1936. In the prefatory note he questions the value of a miscellany, but he owes the effort of preparation of the volume as he says "to some of the friends of a younger generation who have encouraged me to compile it; most particularly to William Plommer, and also J.R. Ackerley, R.J. Buckingham, and Christopher Isherwood" (Forster, 1955, p.viii). The dedication is of some interest for it, as it were, confirms how loved and respected he always was by the generation of young writers that followed his own and will also be our concern in this work.

All the other texts presented in this sample will be taken from another compilation, *Two Cheers for Democracy*, first published in 1938. The prefatory note in this volume is also of some interest for our purposes and quite explanatory. It is Forster himself who acknowledges the political character of his texts, also the ethical and aesthetic "climate" of the second part of the volume, the third part being dedicated to the arts since he has "found by experience that the arts act as an antidote against our present troubles and also as a support to our common humanity" (Forster, 1951, p.xi).

2.1 *Abinger Harvest* - essays on books people and places (1955)[10]

We chose to start our selection of Forster's texts precisely by the *Abinger Harvest* essays since it was the first volume to appear in print. It was published for the first time in 1936, a year which dictated the fate of Europe and of the world for many years to come – the start of the Spanish Civil War which involved one way or another a great deal of English intellectuals and ploughed the way for serious decisions and options in what the international affairs were concerned while at the same time opened the debate around the commitment of writers and artists in England and elsewhere on the purpose of art, in other words, whether artists should put their talents at the service of a political cause to achieve a determined goal. 1936 was also the year the Japanese launched their attack on China giving way to what became known as the Sino-Japanese War, which made Auden and Isherwood abandon the comfort of England to report the conflict. We shall deal with this issue in detail later in the work. For the present purposes we shall remain with E.M. Forster and his *Abinger Harvest - essays on books people and places*. The point at issue here being politics, it may be admissible to include only a couple of the many essays present in this volume. Somewhat earlier, in 1923, he seemed to be already rather deceived with politics in his own country. Egypt might have been the turning point in his outlook on politics, or at least, it might have then become clearer. *A Voter's Dilemma*, for example, written in verse, while eminently political sounds very much like a lament and acknowledges the instability of the politicians to manage the country after the 1914-1918 world conflict. He decidedly manifests his mistrust in politicians and an enormous resentment vis-à-vis their deeds, namely the war they launched Britain in, and with a certain tinge of cynicism utter "jolly words about the dead" (Forster, 1955, pp.28-29).

2.1.1 Our Graves in Gallipoli

In 1922, with the atrocities of the First World War still so fresh in mind, Forster engages himself in writing a short play (the only one we know of) under the title *Our Graves in Gallipoli*. Here, he makes the graves speak! Gallipoli brings to the British, even today, a feeling of discomfort. Dozens of thousands, amongst the over 180.000 allies, of His Majesty's subjects alone lost their lives away from home, in what became known as the "Gallipoli Campaign" or the "Dardanelles Campaign", as it came to be known, whose goal was to conquer Constantinople and which dictated the defeat of the Western powers and the formation of the Turkish nation as we know it today, following the victory of Kemal Ataturk's troops. Forster describes a scene which takes place at the top of Achi-Baba hill, "looking out across the Dardanelles towards Asia and the East" (Forster, 1955, p.30). A pile of stones cover

[10] The 1955 edition was used for the purpose of this analysis. All of Forster's texts in this volume of essays and in the following one – *Two Cheers for Democracy* - bear the year in which they were produced, thus helping the reader to situate himself as far as the historical moment is concerned.

two graves which start to speak to each other when the sun shines over the plain. Here are in brief their considerations on the doubts and motives why they should precisely be where they are. They wonder how they are still important upon earth for seven years past they are still spoken about – some public man or politician mention "the sanctity of our graves in Gallipoli" (Forster, 1955, p.30). And why 'our graves', if they have never left England? Forster does not hesitate to mention the names of those responsible for the catastrophe – Lloyd George or Churchill, accusing them of persuading their young men to enter Asia. Using a sarcastic tone, he mentions graves in Ireland, Iraq, Persia, India and elsewhere in a clear reference, in our perspective, to the expansionist and imperialist tendencies of the whole powerful England while always keeping a pious attitude. By dint of the first grave, he overtly points out the responsible actors and their manoeuvres, blames them for hindering peace in Egypt and for having established themselves regardless of the will of those peoples. All the money England has to spare is but for graves. The second grave advances the questions to which the first grave promptly answers – inexplicably England is now supported by almost all nations. And the first grave explains how the rich and powerful would be unfit to fight, so poor resourceless young men were to be persuaded to fight for them and respond to the call "Gallipoli Graves, Gallipoli Graves, Gallipolli, Gally Polly Gally Polly!" (Forster, 1955, p.32). When the point comes that the second grave reveals its identity as a Turk and before the surprise of his unfortunate companion the second grave still retorts "All graves are one!" (Forster, 1955, p.33). And Forster puts in the words of the English grave what we think was his most genuine sentiment about war "Ah, but why can they not learn it while they are still alive?" (Forster, 1955, p.33).The question remains to be answered, while Forster in a last note in a very matter of fact manner announces the war preparations on the other side of the coast.

It seems Forster was well aware of how sterile war is, how it ruined his generation and the prospect was none other than the ruin of the coming generations, while preoccupied with the dead of the past, the English were already committing the whole nation to an uncertain and ghostly future.

2.1.2 Liberty in England

The text *Liberty in England* (Forster, 1955, p.60), which we would like to include also in these set of works, featuring an address delivered at the International Writers Congress in Defence of Culture (Congrès International des Ecrivains) in Paris, on June 21st, 1935, is solely mentioned as a pertinent example, but dealt with in a further chapter apropos the involvement of writers in politics.

Consistently with his life trajectory and the ideas he had so far supported, he accepts the invitation addressed to him to participate in the Writers International Congress in Paris, where he manifests his views and concerns about an England, eager to preserve what had been conquered in former times and had made of the country the first world democracy, and about a world on the fringe of another war of unpredictable consequences, so he sensed. He chose to call his text *Liberty in England*.

2.2 *Two Cheers for Democracy* (1951)[11]

We now allow ourselves to move on to the second volume of essays, many of them also produced around the same time of those presented in *Abinger Harvest*, but only brought to the general public two years later, being thus part of *Two Cheers for Democracy*. Once again, we selected eminently political texts to make our point clear –*Menace to Freedom*, *Racial Exercise*, *Tolerance*, *Romain Rolland and the Hero* just to conclude with what is considered to be his "intellectual testament" – *What I Believe*, a somewhat longer text, but one which deserves our closest attention since it is quite determinant of what E. M. Forster, the man, the citizen and the artist is like, thus supplying us with elements which may help the understanding of some of his options, decisions and moves in the course of his long life.

2.2.1 *The Menace to Freedom*

The Menace to Freedom, written in 1935, on the brink of the Spanish Civil War, and not so far away from the Second World War which was to ravage the whole of Europe and shake the most profound creeds of honest human beings, is but a reflection on the individual and his position when faced with the current conflicts: "For politics are based on human nature; even a tyrant is a man and our freedom is really menaced today because a million years ago Man was born in chains" (Forster, 1951, p.9). Because of this, Man, according to him, cannot attain freedom today, although many efforts have been carried out throughout the centuries and great endeavours in the realms of arts and literature achieved. If attempts to break the chains and unloose conventions were carried out throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the twentieth century suffers from the failure and deceit of attaining peace in 1914 and the deceit of attaining a sound democracy. Tyrants proliferate thus reducing parliamentary democracy and even kings' power, he sustains, overtly clarifying his political trend – he believes in parliamentary democracy. He is a liberal, more accurately a liberal humanist.

The moment Forster reflects exactly upon this precise issue seems to be linked to the imposition of totalitarian regimes in Europe – Italy and Germany and their claims on other territories other than their own. Men are surrounded by "the ghosts of chains, the chains of ghosts, but they are strong enough, literally stronger than death, generation after generation hands them on", he argues. Forster's "chains" are, in our perspective, no different from what Althusser came, some three decades later, to elaborate upon and called "ideology" or, for that matter, from Foucault's idea of "power" from which the individual is unable to shun regardless of how hard he might fight them, they will always be present and they will always be prevalent. The feeling of entrapment will always be a hurdle. It seems, however, that Forster, albeit admitting the existence of such "chains", does not think of them as thoroughly

[11] The 1951 edition was used for the purpose of this analysis.

and irreparably involving and inescapable as do the two French theoreticians. There will still be hope, and the hope lies on the individual and on the individual action alone.

For Forster, freedom as such is a remote concept, so he turns to the Man himself, who, apart from seeking his (or her) own liberty, cherishes also the desire to love, and it is in the combination of both freedom and love that might reside the solution for the disappearance of the menace now pending over freedom, for the wish to love people is born within the individual and it is as genuine as the personal liberty, therefore it is what should prevail over everything else.

Man, friendship, love and freedom seem to be for Forster the key ingredients for a better life amongst individuals, thus focusing his attention and belief on the action of the individual as such and in detriment of the collective action which he seems to be so sceptical about. As said above, he does not contemplate the socialist dispensation; his most profound beliefs lay on the man's action as a means to achieve better and more convenient arrangements for the society. Freedom of mind and movement seem to be quintessential in him.

2.2.2 *Racial Exercise*

Already in 1939, E. M. Forster allows himself to engage in a *Racial Exercise* where he dismantles the idea of a "pure race". Taking his own family as an example, he arrives at the conclusion that there is no such thing as "pure race" and that there will not be. Forster's reflection on the issue does not seem so strange since the theme appeared very much in fashion then. In England, Oswald Mosley was the *porte-parole* of such ideas. A former conservative politician, Mosley turned into a Labour MP in 1918-1924 and again in 1926-1931, and, under Prime Minister James Ramsey MacDonald, he was Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster[12] in his Labour Government. Having resigned in 1931 in disagreement with his own party on account of unemployment policies, Oswald Mosley was to acquire some fascination regarding the Italian Fascists. The following year, he was to visit Benito Mussolini in Italy. This was the first step to the founding of a political party which he named as New Party and which included the British Union of Fascists, also his creation sometime earlier. The British Union of Fascists was to change its name, later in 1936, to British Union of Fascists and National Socialists, very much due to his inclination and sympathy vis-à-vis Nazi Germany, only to change once more to simply British Union in 1937. Due to its violent character and direct clashes with other political movements and parties in England, the Union was finally banned by the state in 1940. As a result Mosley was interned with another seven hundred and fifty fascist militants. Fascism and Nazism were making their way in England too. The dissemination of racial hatred was a reality in Forster's moderate England. And he was aware of how dangerous that could be.

[12] The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster is appointed by the monarch on advice of the Prime Minister. He has amongst his official duties the governance and administration of the Duchy. He must answer before the Parliament.

Then Hitler brought about the concept of the supremacy and superiority of the Aryan race – healthy, tall, well-built, blue eyed individuals! Forster then wonders "how extraordinary it is that governments which claim to be realistic should try to base themselves on anything as shadowy and romantic as race!" (Forster, 1951, p.19). Obviously, in a clear reference to the judgement of people on the grounds of their ethnical group, religion or race in Germany, and the regime settled there since 1933, which decidedly brought to an end the Weimar Republic, by then so frail and incapable to cope with the current affairs of the country. Europe was becoming, as far as that particular issue was concerned, an unbearable place, and he sensed that. He knew how paramount and pertinent it should be to raise and bring to the public agenda that precise question at that precise time. Race, he sustains, "belongs to the unknown and unknowable past. It depends upon who went to bed with whom in the year 1400… and what historian will ever discover that?" (Forster, 1951, p.19), thus simply and squarely dismissing the importance of "race". He considers what he calls "community of race" as "an illusion", but he warns against the "belief in race" as a "psychological force" since people like to belong to "a pure stock" and may explain why dictators can so easily use the fact to serve their own conveniences, as he textually says "…they have very cleverly hit on the weak spot of the human equipment - the desire to feel a hundred per cent, no matter what the percentage is in" (Forster, 1951, p.22).

2.2.3 *Tolerance*

In 1941, with the Second World War already going on for a couple of years, Forster speaks of tolerance in a short text bearing exactly the same title - *Tolerance* – in a definite attempt to try and bring the ruling class to its senses. The war was to last for another four years but, apparently, everyone was already designing plans for reconstruction while the enemies were fabricating new schemes for a political future order in Europe.

Maybe a good look into a recently published book, *Não há Mapa Cor-de-Rosa – A História (Mal)Dita da Integração Europeia*, by the Portuguese historian and former Minister of Foreign Affairs, José Medeiros Ferreira (2013), who again brings the matter forth, would be useful at this point. In it, Medeiros Ferreira gives a fairly detailed account of what were the German propositions, during the Second World War, for the establishment of a "New European Order". According to the author, it seems that the German projects for the continent were made clear after Germany had launched her attack on the Soviet Union in June 1941. England, in the words of the then German Minister of Foreign Affairs, Joachim von Ribbentrop, should be kept out of the "European Fortress", the Bolsheviks were to be destroyed and a "voluntary alliance with France was to be established" (Ferreira, 2013, p.76). A Federal Europe should then be born out of the most powerful countries in Europe – Germany and Italy. By 1942, they spoke of "positive reasons" for the constitution of a confederation or even of a federation. Those who opposed the Germans' idea of Europe were threatened. "Sincere cooperation" was what should be sought for with countries like Finland, Hungary, Romania or Bulgaria. Their idea was to build up a great economic area focused on

modern technologies and communications and an international distribution of labour was to take place in their projects. To attain such goal, they should embark on what they called "positive propaganda", petty "European Civil wars" were to be surmounted in favour of "the common destiny of the European peoples" (Ferreira, 2013, p.77). The two core countries would be responsible for keeping Europe in good order. But Italy was to be invaded by the Allied forces in 1943, and thus France could be admitted to substitute Italy in this "chessboard", as it were.

Before all this madness, a new world was also in Forster's mind but, according to him, it could only be built when in presence of a healthy and solid state of mind, one which permitted clear and unprejudiced thinking and free of prejudice. Before trade-conferences, economics or diplomacy are made effective "a sound state of mind is needed" (Forster, 1951, p.43). Professionals, whoever they are, from architects to international commissioners "must be inspired by the proper spirit, and there must be the proper spirit in the people for whom they are working" (Forster, 1951, p.44). This idea that civilization should be rebuilt upon such spiritual quality as tolerance distinctly illustrates his lucidity when it comes to public affairs. One would expect Forster to sustain that "love" was that "spiritual" quality necessary to make humanity move forward, but he, who, at that time, had already gone through the First World War and directly suffered its effects and had witnessed the atrocities of the Spanish Civil War, was no longer a romantic preaching love amongst men. Tolerance was the recipe. One loves what one knows, what is close, what is directly implicated in one's life, the rest one has to live with and thus to respect and tolerate, he sustains. Therefore, he calls attention to the fact that, once the war reaches an end, it will be necessary to live with the Germans. And here, it must be admitted, he really did possess an unmatching clarity and lucidity of mind, and as someone outside "formal" politics, his ideas were as a vision, almost a pre-announcement, for, when he wrote his essay, only two years had gone by since the beginning of the war. He equates the possibility of peace with the Germans, and tolerance will be the key and "will be imperative after the establishment of peace" (Forster, 1951, p.46).This position is not much different from that held by those who later came to be known in recent European history as "Europe's founding fathers" – did Jean Monnet not find a way to approach Frenchmen and Germans even though it was just a "commercial agreement"? Monnet, who dedicated his life to the cause of European integration, together with Robert Schumann – the French Foreign minister, designed the "Schumann Plan" which foresaw the merger of the West European heavy industry, for a joint control of the steel and coal production, so that the armament industry would not be easily viable! A "commercial agreement" which was to turn into a political one, it must be acknowledged.

Konrad Adenauer – as chancellor of the German Federal Republic, immediately after the war - entailed every effort possible to lead a policy of reconciliation with France signing a friendship treaty in 1963 with President De Gaulle, which became a milestone on the path to European integration. Winston Churchill, in turn, thought that only a united Europe could guarantee peace and rid Europe of the ills of nationalism and war!

Within this context, it is still of some relevance to recall the man who laid the foundations for common agricultural policies in Europe - Sicco Mansholt, a Dutch resistance fighter, himself a farmer, and a true European. Hunger during the war had shocked him immensely. He reckoned that Europe should be self-sufficient in agricultural terms so that food supplies at "stable and affordable" prices should be guaranteed for all. These were just some Europeans who came to share this idea of civilization and tolerance with Forster. Indeed, a great deal of courage was needed to carry out such project as a Europe of peace and cooperation among its peoples after such a destructive war for which the primary responsibility was to be placed upon the Germans. And, according to E. M. Forster, if civilization is to continue "tolerance is the quality which is most needed after the war. This is the sound state of mind which we are looking for. This is the only force which will enable different races, and classes, and interests to settle down together to the work of reconstruction" (Forster, 1951, p.45). And here again Forster expresses no different ideas from those men, whom we referred to above, who happened to have had the task to help rebuild and settle new policies of cooperation amongst the European countries: the ones who laid the foundations for a better life on this continent of ours. The worries of these men were to entail measures to pave the way so that peace should be preserved and integration and cooperation among the European states and peoples would be the path to achieve such goal. Those were also Forster's manifest worries.

It would be of some relevance at this point to mention, though very briefly, that in the Preamble establishing a Constitution for Europe one can read that "Europe's religious and humanist inheritance" should be preserved thus respecting the desire "of the peoples of Europe to transcend their ancient divisions in order to forge a common destiny, while remaining proud of their national identities and history". Edward Morgan Forster did not live to witness this, but he would have approved of it. He would have wanted it all: values of respect for human dignity, liberty, democracy, equality, and respect for human rights as stated in article 1.2, pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between men and women. There was, to a certain degree, quite a European sentiment in these men tired of war and this would have pleased them immensely. It is interesting noting how John Lehmann, like Forster, manifested a sentiment of a European nature even before this war started. How he equated his condition with that of other Europeans; Lehman was to wonder, already in 1935, "How to get out of this trap?" and "How to find sanity and a clear thought again?" and Lehmann carries on wondering: "How to defend oneself, to be active, not to crouch paralyzed as the hawk descends? But there must be hundreds, thousands like myself in every town in Europe, wrestling with this nightmare" (Lehmann, 1955, p.225). This was John Lehmann but it might as well have been Forster. The establishment of these universal rights could only be welcome and contribute to the appeasement of these intellectuals' minds, and at length, also the minds of the peoples in this continent.

We may admit that Richard Zeikowitz may have interpreted Forster's lack of faith in militant ideals, as the former clearly acknowledges, as being "decidedly apolitical", but we

hold that these are two diverse concepts. Politics is the essence of the whole text. Just to finish this brief comment on *Tolerance*, it would certainly be interesting to look into one of Forster's ideas why love is not the element to be considered, tolerance "carries on when love gives out, and love generally gives out as soon as we move away from our home or our friends, and stand among strangers in a queue for potatoes" (Forster, 1951, p.47). This remotely echoes Primo Levi's words, some six years later, in 1947, in his work *Se questo è un uomo* (*Se isto é um homem*/*If this is a man*): "Não é homem quem esperou que o seu vizinho acabasse de morrer para lhe tirar um quarto de pão…" (Levi, *s.d.*, p.175[13]), tolerance is needed to be a man, to continue to be a man, to be a human being and, Forster sustains he "is nude in the queue"! Yet, tolerance is not synonymous with wickedness. To rebuild civilization is a complex process, love comes later and perhaps the private realm where it enters will one day help the making of public affairs, so he expected, but certainly not in the year 1941, when the text was written and there would still be four more long years of war to come.

We may now abandon *The Second Darkness* and enter the second part of *Two Cheers for Democracy*. We shall leave out for the moment the opening text of the second part, *What I Believe*, only to come back to it at a later stage.

In the texts about other fellow writers E.M. Forster never failed to mention the political aspects of their lives as he does, for example, with André Gide in a text on his death. When referring to the Writers Conference in Paris, 1935, he says of the French writer "Like many others at that date, he was then hopeful of the Russian experiment, he was not scared by its economic and social heresies, and he had not foreseen its contempt for individual freedom or its regimentation of intellect and of taste". (Forster, 1951, p.232). It is quite obvious in these lines that Forster himself held vis-à-vis this precise issue his own view, as Gide would also, not without grief, later correct.

At this stage it would certainly be paramount to briefly look into some of Gide's reflections in his *Retour de l'U.R.S.S.* in order to have a clearer idea why he did change his view about the country of the Soviets after his visit. André Gide was invited by the Soviet state to be present on the occasion of Maxim Gorki's burial ceremonies in Moscow, June 1936. He was only too thrilled to accept the offer notwithstanding the fact that "de récents décisions qui semblaient dénoter un changement d'orientation ne laissaient pas de nous inquiéter" (Gide, 2012, p.3). At the ceremony, in the Red Square, in his speech to the mourners, four days after his arrival in the country, albeit having already some reservations, it was still possible for him to assert, and referring to the U.R.S.S, that "Nous la défendrons!" (Gide, 2012, p.95). After the ceremonies the visit was to last yet for some time during which he visited, among others, factories, mines, homes for elderly people, schools, agricultural units, culture parks, villages and cities; and, more important than that, he spoke to people. He acknowledged the remarkable achievements of the U.S.S.R., but he did not feel

[13] Translated into Portuguese from the 1958 Italian edition. The Portuguese edition is currently the only one available; therefore the quotations from Levi's work will be presented in the Portuguese language.

competent to judge the quality of the food or the reasons why everything available was ugly or yet the reason why the people would act idly, and still believed that "L'intensification de la production permettra bientôt, je l'espère, la selection, le choix, la persistence du meilleur et la progressive élimination de produits de qualité inférieure" (Gide, 2012, p.43). But he certainly felt competent to reflect upon the individual as such in that new society in progress in which he so enthusiastically had wanted to believe and had dreamt of as a means to improve the living of mankind. He, who wanted to have faith in it, speaks of the "inertie de la masse" as one of the most important and most serious aspects of the problem that "Stalin avait à resoudre" (Gide, 2012, p.46). He did want to believe, but he found no way to explain certain features of the system. "(…) je voudrais exprimer la bizarre et attristante impression qui se dégage de chacun de ces «intérieurs» : celle d'une complète dépersonnalisation". And it was exactly this "dépersonnalisation" that he found so bewildering. The fact that the "bonheur de tous ne s'obtient qu'en désindividualisant chacun", that conformism in the Soviet society became a habit in such a way that he could not believe that those people were the same who had made the revolution; to realize this fact was something for him difficult to accept. One can only sense the discomfort of absolute political void, the tragic feeling of having to review one's own position vis-à-vis that "nouveau monde"; the creed was that in the "coeurs et dans nos esprits nous attachions résolument au glorieux destin de l'U.R.S.S. l'avenir même de la culture…" (Gide, 2012, p.62). This was so for Gide but never for Forster who so zealously cultivated individual relations and so persistently tried to preserve them and had always felt the risks and dangers of that "dépersonnalisation" that so much afflicted Gide. Therefore, and out of profound intellectual honesty, Gide had to admit that he had been mistaken and that to recognize his error was but the only thing he could at that stage do. For him, there was a more important goal : "Il y a des choses plus importantes à mes yeux que moi-même ; plus importantes que l'U.R.S.S. : c'est l'humanité, c'est son destin, c'est sa culture" (Gide, 2012, p.65). Still apropos Gide's *prise de conscience* vis-à-vis the Soviet regime, George D. Painter, in his critical biography of Andrè Gide, was to tackle the issue in a manner which very much approaches ours. Here is what the English author had to say:

> "It is curious, too, that on his arrival every face he saw was beaming with energy and joy, while later, when his faith was destroyed, everyone seemed oppressed, stupid, despairing. But the overall insight of his indictment is such, that it needed the cold war of post-war Stalinism to reveal its full profundity and surprise one with its topicality. Again and again, as when he notes the Soviet's persuading the people that everyone is less happy in other countries, and to that end preventing communication with the outside world; the replacement of the old spirit of revolution with a new spirit of conformism; the forcing of composers and writers to follow the party line – 1936 in the clear sight of Gide resembles the 1950's and 1960's." (Painter, 1968, p.115)

The fact that the intellectuals, writers and artists were prevented from freely fulfilling their role as critics of the society they were inserted in was unacceptable for Andrè Gide as much as it was for E.M. Forster.

Had Forster not been concerned about such issues, about the feasibility of a new society of the kind they had in the Soviet Union, had he not given the matter a profound thought, he

would have never come out in the public defence of André Gide. And, getting hold of Pierre Macherey once more "the text says what it does not say". And certainly Forster's text did not say it all! There are still stories to be told. One can only easily perceive an implicit criticism – he was never to explicitly manifest himself to this respect - to that particular political regime and, ultimately, his liberal views. Having been forced to live on the margin, at least in what concerns his sexual orientation, he learnt and unconditionally praised and cherished the benefits and importance of freedom of expression and movement.

2.2.4 *Romain Rolland and the Hero*

No less interesting, from a political point of view, is Forster's 1945 text on another French fellow writer, Romain Rolland(1866-1944), who had died "a couple of months" before. He gave his text the title *Romain Rolland and the Hero*.

Lionised at the beginnings of his literary career as a very promising figure of the French letters, Rolland never fulfilled that promise, but the world "did not fulfil his hopes" either and, as a consequence, his reputation suffered. So, whether or not he was a great writer was arguable, according to Forster. But E.M. Forster had liked *Jean Christophe* and describes with genuine enthusiasm the coming out of the volumes and the evolution of its hero. *Jean Christophe* was then an inspiring source of conversation amongst friends. Holder of the Nobel Prize for Literature, which Rolland was awarded in 1916, it is as an extraordinary human being that he will always be remembered, so Forster thinks.

Romain Rolland also entered the First World War, a reality not alien to Forster himself as his contemporary. Forster chose to deal with Rolland's political and human aspects rather than the literary ones, most likely because of the reasons outlined before. All his life Forster always cherished kindness and generosity amongst people, so it comes as no surprise that these were precisely Rolland's features that he most appreciated and therefore praised. He further compares him to Marcel Proust. He may not be remembered the same way Proust will always be, as a writer, but he was "a far bigger person than Proust from the social and moral point of view" (Forster, 1951, p.238), he sustains. He advocates that Romain Rolland was shattered by the First World War "to an extent that we can scarcely comprehend" (Forster, 1951, p.235). He associated himself to those who suffered from the effects of the war, and further his thought by asserting that "We are all of us tougher, and though we still cherish hopes, they are protected by a very necessary crust of cynicism. We are no longer surprised" (Forster, 1951, p.235). Rolland, Forster continues, "was conscious how both civilizations – German and French – were destroying each other" much to the grief of the French intellectual. And Forster invites the reader to engage himself in an exercise towards trying to understand Rolland's "strong Teutonic sympathies" (Forster, 1951, p.234), from music to literature and to the great men. But this cult, Forster asserts, was "beneficent" since it meant no "power over others", it was solely a matter of creation and exploration.

Forster emphasises in him his qualities from a social and moral view point, and his everlasting readiness and passion for fighting towards a better world. Having become an

internationalist, he was also a precursor of the League of Nations "he moved across frontiers towards internationalism as surely as the Rhine moves through Germany to the universal sea" (Forster, 1951, p.238); and such a position was not an easy one to take in 1944.

2.2.5 *What I Believe* and Isherwood's *A Personal Statement*

It may be worthwhile, and still remaining faithful to *Two Cheers for Democracy*, detaining ourselves in a text which seems to be one of the most revealing of Forster's character as a human being. Produced in 1939, when Forster was already sixty years old, therefore the work of a mature person, and when the world's greatest military conflict was underway. Somewhat longer than most of his essays, and certainly one of the most read, *What I Believe*, a powerful text where he leaves nothing and no one untouched, remains as what can deservedly be called an intellectual testament, and of which Frank Kermode would say, in 2007, that "the familiar humorous mild tone of his essay is meant to accommodate the boldness of the claims made by its argument to the unassertive personality of its author" (Kermode, 2010, p.132). We could not agree more with Kermode when he refers to the humorous tone of the essay and its author's "unassertive personality"! It was probably Forster's "unassertive personality" that might have misled, in our perspective, Richard Zeikowitz. He seems not to have comprehended Forster's distance vis-à-vis active militancy and, therefore, mistook it as an "apolitical" attitude. Indeed, the writer's option did not contemplate his commitment to any kind of political party or organisation, but it did not contemplate indifference either in what political matters were concerned.

It seems pertinent at this point to mention one equally interesting essay produced by Christopher Isherwood under the title *A Personal Statement*, extracted from his lectures on writing at Berkeley University, in 1963, which somehow runs parallel to *What I Believe*. They both stand almost as both writers' manifestos. Curiously enough, Christopher Isherwood was also approaching his sixth decade, and the texts of both men, sharp observers, are replete of intelligent considerations which work as a balance of their lives and experiences. What remains to be shown is to what extent Forster's own text might have had any influence on the younger writer. In our judgement it might have had and, although in his short text Isherwood does not mention Forster, it is clear that the latter was a source of inspiration and appears as an example to be followed.

Morgan Forster's opening statement is revealing "I do not believe in Belief", and how scornful he sounds in his motto "Lord, I disbelieve – help thou my unbelief" (Forster, 1951, p.67). Right from the beginning of his essays he brings forward the issue of religion, but he has none! When "so many militant creeds" are in fashion, Forster thinks a creed of one's own, and for purposes of self-defence, is only too necessary. The author contends that "tolerance,

good temper and sympathy" are no longer enough to divert from a state of muddle to that of order[14].

In 1938, they were as frail as a flower "battered beneath a military jack-boot", in an overt reference to the current state of affairs. Faith he dislikes, but, alas, "we live in an age of faith" (Forster, 1951, p.67). Some sort of balance should therefore be found to survive in a world which seems to have lost its balance and grip, a violent and cruel world, according to him. If Forster is to stick to faith, he should start by personal relationships, which for him are "comparatively" though not "absolutely solid" (Forster, 1951, p.67). "Psychology", he says, "has shown that there is something incalculable in each of us, which may at any moment rise to the surface and destroy our normal balance" (Forster, 1951, p.68).

Primo Levi, the Italian resistant and survivor of the Auschwitz concentration camp, and already referred to in our considerations on Forster's *Tolerance*, less than a decade later did formulate Forster's very idea in a thoroughly intelligible way precisely in his book *If this is a Man*, by elaborating on man's intrinsic nature in extreme situations, as that he happened to have undergone and that provided ground which was the object of his poignant reflections on human kind. To this purpose, here is what he says:

> "…diante das carências e mal-estar físicos obsessivos, muitos hábitos e muitos instintos sociais ficam completamente silenciados….Parece-nos, no entanto, digno de atenção este facto: verifica-se que existem entre os homens duas classes particularmente bem distintas: os que se salvam e os que sucumbem…. No *Lager* a luta para sobreviver é sem remissão, porque cada um está desesperado e ferozmente só…. Se um Null Achtzehn qualquer vacilar, não encontrará quem lhe estenda uma mão; mas sim alguém que o deitará abaixo…" (Levi, s.d, pp.89-90)

Without having gone through such extreme conditions, E. M. Forster had himself the intelligence to sense that it might be so for "We don't know what we are like. We can't know what other people are like" (Forster, 1951, p.68). However difficult it might be, regardless of the "political storm", we do trust people, so he asserts "I believe in personal relationships", there is always a possibility of change and relationships certainly help to put some kind of order in the "contemporary chaos. For E. M. Forster, the question of order is paramount and central to his thought. The idea of order is to come out recurrently also in his essay *Art for Art Sake*, in the words of sir Frank Kermode "It is an aesthetic imperative to which he is always faithful" (Kermode, 2010, p.134). For life to have a meaning, for life to be made possible, trust in people is needed. And another requisite comes now into question: that of "Reliability", which is required of the individual, of Forster himself, and this is in fact what he tries to be - reliable, and holds that it is not "a matter of contract", since this is the realm of personal relationships and it is not possible without "a natural warmth", and refuses to regard personal relationships as "bourgeois luxuries" and "to dedicate ourselves to some movement or cause instead", the liberal thought that Forster always held and never denied. Following his reasoning, what comes next may be exactly what so much influenced

[14] Forster was to elaborate on the subject of tolerance again in an essay already dealt here with entitled *Tolerance*, and where once again he recovers the theme and confirms his belief in it.

Christopher Isherwood: "I hate the idea of causes and if I had to choose between betraying my country and betraying my friends, I hope I should have the guts to betray my country" (Forster, 1951, p.68). Christopher Isherwood puts it another way though not so much dissimilar "I put the individual before the State" and further affirms that "What matters is our examples and not our opinions" (Berg, 2007, p.244), which sounds very much in line with the issue of "reliability" in the case of Forster – one is to act according to what one believes in and keep some sort of coherence.

Personal relations involve feelings such as love and loyalty to a person and they are bound to be incompatible with the claims of the State, says the older writer, in what seems a permanent conflict between the freedom of the individual's mind and the conventions and constraints of the society he is inserted in. Opposed as he was to all forms of totalitarianism, of discrimination on the grounds of race or religious creeds, Forster believes in Democracy, not as the ultimate dispensation, since he acknowledges its limits, and therefore not the "beloved republic", but surely the best of all known systems so far, for it works as a guardian for both the individual's freedom of mind and personal life. In Democracy, Press and Parliament are the guaranty for public criticism. With all its possible defects, regardless of its efficiency, Parliament still criticises and talks, and criticism and talk is reported so it reaches the ordinary man. And this is precisely the reason why Democracy deserves two cheers – "criticism and variety". But Forster does not leave the reader without stating his conviction that personal relationships, like any other creed may be a source of suffering "there lies at the back of every creed something terrible and hard for which the worshipper may one day be required to suffer, and there is even a terror and a hardness in this creed of personal relations" (Forster, 1951, p.69), says he.

According to Forster, an "efficiency regime tries to divide its citizens into bossers and bossed" (Forster, 1951, p.69), and that is not what he stands for, since all man are needed to make a civilization, and only in a democracy importance is granted to the individual as such. Here again he keeps a clear distance from both the so-called left-wing totalitarian regimes, such as in the USSR, and the right-wing madness of Germany's and Italy's dictators who, by then, both managed to spread their reign of terror.

Unlike many writers and intellectuals of the epoch, E.M. Forster was never to compromise, as, for example, André Gide, dealt with before and whom he admired, had done, or his fellow English writers of a couple of generations after his own, like Stephen Spender, Edward Upward or Cecil-Day Lewis. He was to keep himself apart, not from politics, but rather from a clear and definite commitment to any political cause – although throughout most of his work and life one can sense his anti-imperialist and anti-colonialist voice, and his undeniable love for a world free of war and conflict, he was never to be fully explicit. Edward Said, in his *Culture and Imperialism* (1994), was to refer to E. M. Forster in a sympathetic and somewhat loving way, but regretting at the same time that, being what he intrinsically was, he had never been more effective in putting forward his genuinely anti-imperialist thinking: "Consider first *A Passage to India*, a novel that surely expresses the author's affection for the

place", and goes on to wonder "if present day India is neither a place nor the time for identity merger, then for what?" (Said, 1994, p.200).

Further on, speaking of Fielding's inherent opposition in *A Passage to India*, Said asserts that "he cannot put his objections against the inequities of British rule in political or philosophical terms…." (1994, p.200). Said finds justification in the novel as a genre to argue that "*A Passage to India* is at a loss partly because Forster's commitment to the novel form exposes him to difficulties in India he cannot deal with." And further acknowledges that "….it is also true that Forster's India is so affectionately personal and remorselessly metaphysical…" (1994, pp.200-201). But we shall come back to this issue when dealing with *A Passage to India* in particular, further in the text.

As a true humanist, Forster lessens the importance of force, and gets hold of Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen* as an example to explain how for some "fortunate reason the strong are stupid" (Forster, 1951, p.71) as if relying on the assumption that the giants, although possessing the gold, are stupid and inoperative while the Valkyries are symbols of courage, love and freedom, and that could hopefully resemble the real world. He admits that all society rests upon force, the intervals of the use of force and violence are what matters, these intervals correspond to what the writer calls "civilization", since creativity is always present no matter what dispensation one is under. In our judgement, Forster has something of a visionary as artists mostly tend to have. There is almost a certain *naïveté*, an indefective belief that ultimately men are born good, very much in Rousseau's fashion, and express a logic that only a humanist like him could have faith in – the world tends to get bigger, hence, men ought to try and find the ways to live together, and for such accomplishment no Great Men are needed.

At this point, it may be worthwhile detaining ourselves in the issue of what Forster considers as his "aristocracy". At some length in his "manifesto", and albeit his denial, he is a true believer, he defines an "aristocracy" of his own, which, by its very nature, is not associated with "power", "rank" or "influence". In this "aristocracy" of his, all nations, classes or ages are permitted and understanding is likely to be attained – "they represent the true human tradition, the one permanent victory of our queer race over cruelty and chaos" (Forster 1951, p.73).Chaos and disorder seem to be his primary concerns, therefore he felt compelled to design a model of his own for the truly good man who, following his genuine line of thought would not be liable to deceive. The truly good man is "considerate", not "fussy", courageous, must have the "power to endure" and hold a certain sense of humour, he may or may not be an ascetic. Forster himself is not, but, with a tinge of condescension, of disapproval, he may accept those who are, notwithstanding the fact that "I don't feel that my aristocrats are a real aristocracy if they thwart their bodies" (Forster, 1951, p.74).He thus dismisses the point as a minor issue. His "aristocracy" runs counter the establishment, its members are the ones who, no matter the circumstances – and here we may go back to the theoreticians that inspired us to follow our analytical model – allow of that margin of dissent and refuse to be controlled by ideology; in other words, they are not alienated, their

"kingdom" being the "whole wide-open world" and the possibilities for real achievement and for breaking loose innumerable. Sir Frank Kermode was to say of the Forsterian Aristocracy that "since they form a kind of Aristocracy its members would not easily be recognised as democrats" (Kermode, 2010, p.138).

In his whimsical fashion, Forster goes on saying that in the unlikely hypothesis of a future Saviour, he will make use of his Aristocracy's good will and disposition, and the introduction of new models will enable an all effective distribution, a better management of the resources, thus eliminating starvation. This, of course, in the plan of economics, but also morals and politics are to be allowed particular care and attention. And it is precisely at this point that Forster, who right at the beginning of his text disclaims any association with religion and denies any religious pretentions, re-emerges now with theological references. Forster goes on to discuss Jacopone da Todi's[15] (Kermode, 2010, p.133) prayers some six hundred years prior "thou who lovest me - set this love in order", and although he acknowledges the fact that Todi's prayer will very unlikely be granted, he makes clear that our "probable route" will have to undergo a process through which order is bound to be established. And once again Forster, who had already experienced real, heavy and tangible disorder and chaos in both political and social spheres - he had undergone the First World War, he had been genuinely concerned with the Spanish Civil War and sensed another catastrophic war on the way – claims here, as he recurrently does, for order as a necessary asset for the betterment of life on earth. In his text, Forster clearly evinces some contradictions as if almost fearing some kind of a lesser and easy criticism which would, most certainly, expose the religiosity he keeps denying.

After making use of Todi's prayers, the writer contends that the solemn claims of the orthodox that such change can only be attained by means of Christianity and "in God's good time", since men have always failed, and for him to try is but a presumption, "leaves me cold", he says, and further emphasises that Christianity will ever be in the position to "cope with the present world-wide mess" (Forster, 1951, p.75), in an open reference to the current international state of affairs. He further contends that if Christianity still holds such influence in the modern society, it is not out of "spiritual appeal", but rather out of "the money behind it" (Forster, 1951, p.75). This is, in our perspective, a rather disturbing assumption, and he seems to have realised the seriousness of his own statement, and somehow makes use of another formulation to inform that Christianity was once a spiritual force which will have to be "restated", "the indwelling spirit", as he puts it, and if so, perhaps, in a non-Christian form, and is well aware that although many may disagree with his idea, he better says this while the possibility of free speech still stands. Such was his fear, such was his apprehension.

[15] Jacopone da Todi was an Italian Franciscan friar of the thirteenth century – 1230 – who wrote spiritual and denunciatory *Laude*s – Devine love is the addressee of his poems, written in archaic Italian with 'grate force and exaltation'. We owe this information to Sir Frank Kermode in his *Concerning E.M. Forster* (2010).

The arguments on Christianity, and somehow the way Forster formulates it, are simultaneously convincing and unconvincing. His whole idea of religion is precisely that – while dismissing Christianity on the one hand, he claims its utility on the other, not for religious purposes but rather for those of politics and morals, typical also of his "unassertive" personality. It is Frank Kermode who refers to Forster's "orientalism" as being informed of a "more secular spirituality'" (Kermode, 2010, p.132). Forster himself praised love and the Beloved Republic as prior values, but, to some extent, they must be connected, he contends and expresses in a fashion which was Forster's alone.

Forster's Beloved Republic, the way he designed it, was but another kind of Utopia, like Sir Thomas More in his day, the almost perfect place where there would be room for the Valkyries alone, for those illuminated, those "aristocrats", the chosen ones, and love and understanding would run naturally, a whole world of culture and erudite references would determine who the members of such a republic might be. While reading *What I Believe*, it is almost as if we, as readers, were trying ourselves in the sense to find out whether we would also deserve to be part of the Forsterian Aristocracy or not; would Forster approve of our accomplishments?!

The capacity individuals have to dream is infinite. Whether more revolutionary or more reformist, utopias are bound to appear, especially at times and in societies where inequities, disorder or chaos are visible or simply sensed. They usually express the most profound expectations and heartfelt desires (or sometimes misgivings and fears) of humanity to attain more acceptable and more equitable ways and patterns of life in society, or sometimes to call attention to what is looming over it[16]. It was not different with Forster. All these longings exist in the collective *imaginaire* and it is through art that very often they make their appearance – what would it be like to live in a society where people could simply be happy?! "A place of felicitie", as Sir Thomas More referred to his imaginary land. More then wrote about a society where the energies should be channelled to prevent human suffering and human pettiness. The establishment of a welfare state was almost premonitory! And the propositions of Tommaso Campanella's, some fifty years later, in his *City of the Sun* (2010) were not so much dissimilar from those in More's "felicitie land". His imaginary society

[16] We think it pertinent to refer here - not so much a utopia but rather a dystopia - Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1977), which was first published in 1932. It seems it makes sense that such a book came out at an epoch when Europe was undergoing severe political and social unrest, but was also experiencing great success in the field of science and technology. Huxley, for whom science was one of his major interests, made use of the current political predicament, science and technological development to build up a fictional future society where the individual as such would give up his will and his own individuality in favour of social stability and let himself be controlled by a totalitarian government (which sounds very much like Thomas Hobbs's (1985) societal model in his *Leviathan*) that would rule by means of science and technology. The year that followed the publication, the Nazis were to seize power in Germany; in 1936 the Spanish Civil War did start, and in 1939 World War Two was to make its way until 1945, with Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombs – the product of science and technology – being dropped in the process. Within this framework, Huxley's dystopia sounds very much like a prophecy if one just focuses on what the world has become after the Second World War. George Orwell's *1984* - written in the aftermath of WWII, 1949, - as well as Ray Bradbury's (1993) *Fahrenheit 451,* sometime later, in 1953, both deal with totalitarian governments that make use of science's last achievements to hold power over the society and control its individuals. Neither *Brave New World* nor the other two dystopias referred to here were places of "felicitie".

also possessed interesting aspects of societal organisation. He meant well, we believe, when he thought of the "distribution of labour", but again it sounds premonitory – was it not what we argued above when dealing with Hitler's plans for a new "European order"? Already in the second half of the nineteenth century, 1872, Samuel Butler (2003) would also have come out with his own "no-where-place" – *Erewhon,* and once again his utopia was to possess features which pointed to the "correction", as it were, of various aspects the Victorian society he was inserted in and of which he was so manifestly critic – religion and the way the Victorians dealt with crime and subsequent punishment, thus making of it a "reformist utopia". Butler's *Erewhon* would possess no machines – he would not trust men enough to make good use of them. The century that followed his was but the confirmation of such fears… But Forster's Beloved Republic was deemed to be "a place of felicitie" or a "sun-drenched city", a place of erudition, of art and culture where personal relations played a paramount role and sex was to be free. In this sense, Forster's utopia certainly possessed the features of a revolutionary one, not connected with matters of influence, hierarchy or power, something he dared to tread on but in his dreams.

Although utopias may sometimes – as we have witnessed in history – be used and be the support for lesser purposes, they will always be needed, and, in our perspective, they are positive. Humanity must be allowed to dream. Did not Gide believe in the communist utopia? And Marx before him? Or Caudwell, or Cornford after him? Did they all not want to add their efforts to the making of a new and more equalitarian and prosperous land where culture and art could freely flourish?! We know now that their "utopia" did not comply with its goals, but they tried nonetheless. E.M. Forster on his turn was, surely, appalled by the growing chaos around him, and he also felt the necessity to create a fictional environment with an imaginary population – his aristocracy – where some order was to be established therefore easing the relations amongst people. Thus he justifies the three cheers for the "Beloved Republic", the perfect land. One can safely assert that his Beloved Republic certainly represents the values contained in the best humanistic principles and tradition.

The last paragraph of *What I Believe* is quite compact and contains – for those who had not understood it before – an overt confession: he claims to be an individualist and a liberal. While Spender starts off where Liberalism no longer serves the best of causes, *Forward from Liberalism* (1937a), Forster felt that Liberalism was "creeping" in him, and if, at a first stage, he felt ashamed, it was no longer so. One can almost sense the writer's feeling of relief while making such an open statement. In the ultimate analysis "other people were equally insecure" (Forster, 1951, p.76), he says. This is so for the issue of liberalism, and he dismisses the issue of individualism by explaining that men "are obliged to be born separately and no-one not even a "dictator-hero" (Forster, 1951, p.76) can "melt them into a single man" since both birth and death walk hand in hand with every human being, whatever his appearance might be, one will die the same way one was born – naked and single.

What I Believe is, *par excellence,* a political document produced at a time when Jacopone's words made sense for its author "O thou who lovest me, set my love in order"

(cited in Karmode, 2010, p.134), order as opposed to jumble so that he might rid himself of his own fears and appease his mind, the healing element being thus "personal relationships", which he competently cultivated till the very end of his long life.

2.3 E.M. Forster BBC Talks 1929-1960

Moving now away from *Two Cheers for Democracy*, we chose, for our purposes here, just a couple of talks by E.M. Forster on the BBC between 1929-1960.

E.M. Forster's talks, as referred to in the general introduction of the volume which selects the writer's talks on the BBC for three decades, have seldom been the object of attention of scholars (Lago, Hughes and Walls, 2008, p.1). It may be worthwhile looking into them for a better understanding of the man, the writer and the concerned citizen. According to Lago's introduction, the *Talks* "are historical artefacts" and also "examples of public intellectual discourse".

Invited by the BBC responsible of The Talks Department, Hilda Matheson, in 1928, E. M. Forster started a new career at the age of fifty which was to last for three decades. The policy of the BBC was then that the talks should be informal and direct, which pleased Forster a great deal; while sticking to individualism, so dear to him, he was able to connect with a vast audience which included individuals of all kinds, and here again the personal relationships as well as the role of the individual liberties were emphasised. He successfully helped to shape and to reformulate various programmes, namely the *Third Programme*, of a more intellectual bend. During the 1930's the writer's talks were becoming stronger as far as the contents were concerned. Forster, as it were, took to like the medium and used it thoroughly and comfortably to pass on his approach to life, to culture and to politics: "his persona moved from novelist to commentator, activist, essayist" (Lago, Hughes and Walls, 2008, p.7). With an "intimate broadcast style", as designed by both Forster, with his intellectual stature, and the BBC, he managed for decades to make high-culture reach both British and Indian listeners, while remaining a fierce supporter of civil liberties.

Although he always fought for independence and freedom of movement within the BBC, occasionally he participated in "State-sponsored propaganda", mainly in war time. Nonetheless, while broadcasting in the Eastern Service, at times, his messages did run counter his own anti-imperialist sentiment towards India for they added to Britain's effort to maintain imperial rule in the territory, but he is no doubt, among the British intellectuals, the one that most influenced India during the last decades of his life.

It is worth noting that the BBC itself and also Forster were willing to, somehow, shape a British identity, therefore, Forster's broadcasts on British culture were so often marked by a tinge of nostalgia that traces back to the Victorian times. Politically he seemed not to have

followed the socialist line[17], but rather a democratic one, so traditionally British. Such position is obviously intimately linked to the whole issue of power itself.

2.3.1 *The Scum of the Earth* and *Road to Bordeaux*

We shall certainly be coming back to the *Talks* when discussing Art and Forster's views on it. Let us remain, for now, with the first one included in a series of Talks under the title *We Speak to India – Some Books*. We decided to comment on his talk delivered on Wednesday, the 15th October 1941 (Foster, 1941). Here the English writer speaks to India about books, and it is precisely the choice of books he made that called our attention, also the fact that Morgan Forster refers to this exact talk in a letter to Christopher Isherwood some four days prior to its delivery (Zeikowitz, 2008, p.98) since he was in the process of preparing it.

For this address, three books were elected: Arthur Koestler's *Scum of the Earth* (1955) and *Road to Bordeaux* by Dennis Freeman and Douglas Cooper (1942). In October 1941 it does not seem so strange that one chose to speak about the "tragedy of France", which had just been occupied by the Nazis and whose contours were none other but dramatic. The third book, *In Quest of Corvo* by A.J.A. Symons, will not be dealt with here for it seems not to be illustrative enough for our purposes, but Forster chose to include it as a tribute to its author who had recently died.

Let us then go back to Arthur Koestler's *Scum of the Earth*. Forster does not detain himself much, we believe for constraints of time, on the contents of either book, but the fact that he selected them is obviously of political significance. He informs his listeners about Koestler's past and it is evident his admiration and respect. It may be worthwhile noting how he speaks about his fellow writer and friend "He is a Hungarian by nationality, a European[18] in outlook. He was one time attracted by communism, but disillusion overtook him" (Forster, 1941, p.151). This fact seems to be of some importance for Forster himself who strongly disbelieved in such political dispensation as he so many times stated, and Koestler's "disillusion" was but the confirmation of his own disbelief[19]. And still he found it important to

[17] The British had by then an already established tradition of socialist movements. Their first socialist party dates back to 1881, the Social Democratic Federation (SDF) as it was called. Amongst its founding members there were William Morris and Eleanor Marx, Karl Marx's youngest daughter. It was later, in 1884, to turn into the Socialist League due to dissident trends within the initial formation. Both W. Morris and E. Marx were founding members of the new organization which was to last until the 1890s. Around 1883 a debating group was taking shape giving rise, in 1884, to what became the Fabian Society, which remained active until 1929. The purpose of the Fabian Society, as a socialist organization, was to try and change the society by means of gradual and steady socialist reforms. Again Eleanor Marx joined its ranks. Amongst the members of the Society were other well-known figures of the British arts and letters such as Edward Carpenter, George Bernard Shaw, Walter Crane, Clement Attlee, who was to be elected PM, for the Labour Party, after World War Two, Arnold Bennett, H. G. Wells, Rupert Brooke, and others.

[18] The use of the concept of 'European' was not at all obvious in the Forties', especially in times of war.

[19] Arthur Koestler's most famous book, entitled *Darkness at Noon,* features the life of a Russian revolutionary while in prison, and was based on Bukharin's case of the so-called Moscow Trials – the Trial of the twenty one, under Stalin, which we shall deal with in more detail further in the text. Koestler himself was imprisoned several times across Europe – Spain, France, England, and seems to be quite sensitive to the dramatic predicament of those who underwent such experience.

say of Koestler that he "had travelled in Northern Asia. He fought on the Republican side of Spain and was in prison there" (Forster, 1941, p.151). It was something Forster had not been able to engage himself in, not because he did not care for politics, or because he did not have an idea what side he should embrace but rather because he did not have the courage to do likewise, as he stated when directly questioned by Isherwood "'Why don't you go to Spain, Morgan?' he replied: 'Afraid to', in his mild cheerful voice" (Isherwood, 2001, p.293). He approves of Koestler as a human being and, as a writer; he has the clear view that his work may be invaluable. *Scum of the Earth* refers to the refugees who during World War Two moved incessantly from place to place and who, whenever the Germans took over, were unwelcome wherever they arrived. Koestler was one of them; it took him ages before he was eventually accepted in England, but also not before having been arrested on his arrival. Forster respects him and his work "and when one of them writes a book as Koestler has and writes it so well and so naturally – it's the best propaganda in the world" (Forster, 1941, p.152). Forster expresses here in this way what was the then young Spender's most profound conviction: "I still think and perhaps exaggeratedly believe that a very good book about things one cares for is a potent instrument. And an imaginative work is more important than one more voice added to a controversial babel" (Spender, 1980, p.123). The book was written by a refugee, and depicts the tragedy of France, betrayed by her own Government (Forster, 1941). In the concentration camp of Le Vernet[20], Koestler had to face the French representatives of authority who sided with the occupier for the mere motive that they wanted to keep their work positions, of which Koestler is bitterly denunciatory. By using Koestler's book, Forster was clearly implying his own views. He wanted the tragedy of France to be known and reflected upon, since for Forster it so crudely made him realise "as nothing else does, the break of Europe" (Forster, 1941, p.152).

The same is true of Freeman's and Cooper's *Road to Bordeaux*. The book was written in the second year of the conflict and first published in London in 1942. Douglas Cooper was a British officer who, due to an eye injury, was not apt to serve in the British Army. To help the war effort, as so many Englishman did at the time, he joined an ambulance unit, together with his compatriot Dennis Freeman, their work then being to take the injured, from dangerous inhospitable territory, to Bordeaux where they would be safe. Their book is thus the detailed description of their experience while serving in the ambulance unit in France. It is of some importance to notice that they open their book by addressing a message "TO THOSE WHO WE LEFT BEHIND"[21]. The note is an apology for writing about them without their consent, but also the expression of the most genuine desire to let the world know about the injustice France was undergoing, a "grave injustice was being done to the French people and to the French Army. So many were being made to pay for the faults of so few. Nobody more than our small Section had experience of the fortitude of the French soldier and of the tragic

[20] Le Vernet was an internment camp in France operating during the German occupation in the Second World War, where the refugees lived in miserable conditions while performing hard labour with no wages (In Koestler's *Scum of the Earth)*.
[21] See Annexe 2.

bewilderment of the French people" (Freeman and Cooper, 1942, p.5). It is not strange though that Forster picked up precisely this book since it met with his own desire of a free France, which is coincident with what is expressed in the note with which Freeman and Cooper started their book "But wherever you are, we know that each one of you will not give up the fight until France is again free" (Freeman and Cooper, 1942, p.5). Once more the emphasis was strong upon the injustice done to the French nation. This is a recurrent theme for Forster; therefore he found it of some importance to advise the reading of these two books to the "British" overseas. The whole of Forster's text is extremely heartfelt; demonstrating by dint of his own interests and concerns how the current political situation so much mattered.

He picks up the theme again, for example, in his broadcast of the 13th February, 1945, this time calling the readers' attention to *Army of Shadows*, by Joseph Kessel[22], which depicts the fight carried out by the underground resistance movement in France while at the same time reflects upon the fate of the French people, and, as he says, although it may give him the impression that he is reading fiction, there is no fiction in it, he explains. The whole book is based upon true facts, true experiences. Kessel was to say:

> On our side we kill kill kill. The French were not prepared, not disposed to kill. Their temperament, their climate, their country, the state of civilization they had reached turned them away from bloodshed." (cited in Forster, 1945, p.328)

And this was most shocking for the old writer. He further adds another passage of Kessel's book:

> I remember how difficult it was for me, in the first period of the resistance, to contemplate murder in cold blood, ambush, planned assassination. And how difficult it was to recruit people for this. No question of such repugnance now. Primitive man has reappeared in France." (cited in Forster, 1945, p.329)

What now follows, and to end this section, are two talks delivered at the BBC microphones. Our choice fell upon the 6th January, 1943 broadcast under the designation *Some Books* and entitled *New Year's Greeting*, and E. M. Forster's address to India on the occasion of her partition, and subsequent independence, delivered on the 15th of August, 1947. Both the first and the second selected talks refer to culture; the first, still during the world conflict and the other already in peace time. Culture is approached here by Forster in its traditional concept – high culture - meaning knowledge and learning, maybe not so much in the sense Raymond Williams or Terry Eagleton would have referred to it.

2.3.2 *New Year's Greeting*

So Forster refers to books and "generally speaking culture". Here he departs from an eminently political statement and, for that matter, a political concern "The world of 1942 was convulsed with military operations, the convulsions will continue into 1943, bringing

[22] Joseph Kessel (1898-1979) was a French novelist of Jewish origin, born in Argentina of Lithuanian parents. *Les Captifs* won him the Grand Prix du Roman de l'Académie Française, 1926.

death and sorrow…" (Forster, 1943a, p.217), and provides his listeners (and now readers) with important and interesting information about the British society in war time which, in our perspective, constitutes a slice of British life over the period that is worth getting acquainted with. It is to this short text that we can turn for evidence of how battered London strove to find some kind of balance amidst grief and destruction. As already contended in this work, the material conditions are decisive for the writer's choices, so he uses the available information together with his own experience and judgement since they are the expression of the material conditions he is inserted in. Thus, Forster goes on to expose to his listeners how the intellectual production and the use given to that intellectual production may influence the behaviour of his fellow men. Books, says he, apart from serving as a source of information or comfort in sorrow, evince the profundity of the spirit and "is anchored to something far beneath those surface storms that ruin our physical lives" (Forster, 1943a, p.217).

Amidst chaos, depression and doubt throughout the war years, Forster carries on broadcasting about his faith in art and literature as a means to attain appeasement of mind, and as a strong weapon to fight tyranny. This was the way he expressed his activism. This is his idea of Art, he adds, and chooses the portico of the National Gallery (although metaphorically) to address his New Year's greetings. And not far from there the Towers of Westminster can be seen, "representing Democracy", although it is not properly represented, since "democracy has not yet found adequate outward expression anywhere" (Forster, 1943a, p.218) he is thankful to see them, he asserts. At some point he explains how the National Gallery, in spite of the rough times, was used to reverse the situation of sadness and concern – the Gallery maintained its doors opened to the general public and concerts were performed at lunch hour for the hundreds of people who visited it, and surely there would be "a wonderful smell of coffee" (Forster, 1943a). Forster rejoices at this and subsequently informs that the general attitude towards German music assumed by the British during the First War, when everything that was German was due to be banned, the attitude now was different and Beethoven, Brahms or Bach could be played. They had eventually realised that the Nazis did not so much care for their own culture. They were not, nor did they want to be, the inheritors of such culture. Mendelssohn and Bloch were both Jewish composers, the same for the poet Heinrich Heine, so it was the Germans who banned their own culture, not the British. They had even refused Goethe on the grounds of his cosmopolitanism, says Forster.

Still the National Gallery would hang one single picture at the time (the rest of the collection being somewhere in safety), and this was, according to him, "an extra vision of beauty", sometimes a Rembrandt, sometimes a Tintoretto. He longs for peace time so that all the Galleries in Europe can exhibit what is hidden in war time. By not having access to different cultures, namely the cultural message of France, one tends to forget how valuable it is and how it adds to the struggle against "provincialism" into which, not only England, but Europe and the whole world, and for that matter, his addressees in India, are merged into in war time. He ends his message with a lament apropos Stefan Zweig's suicide, the previous year, reminding his listeners that he was a humanist who belonged "to the cosmopolitan

European civilization which is at present broken" (Forster, 1943a, p.220). He highlights Zweig's reason, tolerance and production of beauty. The world state of affairs in 1942 might have been the cause for Zweig to put an end to his life, Forster admits.

Throughout the time he cooperated with the BBC, Morgan Forster did try by means of his own appreciation, to bring forth some writers who, although good, were, either not in fashion or for some other reason, relegated to a second plan, like Arthur Koestler, Stefan Zweig, Joseph Kessler or Gerald Heard[23].

He ends his talk weighing between *humanism* "with all its faults" and *fanaticism*. *He* has no doubt, he is a humanist. *We* have no doubt, he was a humanist!

2.3.3 *A Message to India*[24]

To conclude this brief exposition, it is worth to delve into his *Message to India*, broadcast by the BBC on the day of India's independence from the British rule. The message is a mixture of politics, warm regard and affection, but the tone throughout the text is that of serious and genuine concern, which does not run counter what we know of him. It is widely known the role of personal relations played throughout his entire life, his banner, the realm he felt comfortable in, as seen in the section *What I Believe*. He starts his message this way: "Today the country I have known as India enters the past and becomes part of History". We do not for a moment doubt of Forster's anti-imperialist feelings, and if the relations between him and Syed Ross Massood did freeze as the consequence of Massood's own position concerning the British occupation, why should he mention "the country I have known as India", and why does he not sound too enthusiastic about India's independence?! His whole speech sounds rather like a warning. The general tone of the message is of serious and heartfelt preoccupation. Was India not a British colony rather than "a country"?! A benign interpretation of the text should be considered here, and it is that they have committed a mistake dividing the country to serve private and religious interests. The opening statement, in our judgement, is thus illustrative of his disapproval, at a first stage, of the fragmentation/disintegration of India as a whole. He had known it as an immense unity. India had inspired him to write what was to be his masterpiece: his *Passage to India* surely was the product of his critical eye vis-à-vis the British colonization in that immense territory. He might not have been fully unaware either of the religious disputes, which had been going on since mid-nineteenth century, that would lead one day to the end of India as such. The British

[23] Henry Fitz Gerald Heard (1889-1971) was a British born intellectual, historian and philosopher, also a "practising mystic and pacifist". He changed his native England for the United States of America in 1937 where he died (Santa Monica, California), in 1971. He was a major influence on Christopher Isherwood in what concerned the latter's matters of faith. It was Gerald Heard who introduced Isherwood to his spiritual mentor Swami Prabhavananda and Vedanta.

[24] His *Message to India* broadcast on the Independence Day came as result of an invitation of the BBC Eastern Services director, Donald Stephenson, on the occasion. It was part of an extended programme in which participated a "former viceroy, a former Secretary of State, an expert on British and India economic relations and 'a man in the street' as a representative of those Englishmen who have not been in India and have taken only a normal discursive interest in Indian affairs" (Lago, Hughes and Walls, 2008, p.5). It may be worthwhile mentioning here that his friend and life companion, Bob Buckingham, was, at Forster's suggestion, the "man in the street".

rulers would put the blame upon the Muslim community, thus fuelling the hatred between the two most popular religious trends – Hindus and Muslims. And this was to remain so until the Independence and the ultimate division of the Indian territory into two separate countries of two different religious tendencies not without, unfortunately, a prior dislocation of both populations – the Muslim population heading towards the Western part, which was to become Pakistan, and the Hindu population heading East to what remained India, and what Forster was to refer to as "new India".

One can almost sense in his words some kind of regret or even grief, therefore his opening statement "the country I have known as India enters the past and becomes part of History" (Forster, 1947, p.394), as if for him, India were not liable to be fragmented, and in this respect fully approaching the official position of Britain concerning the Indian sub-continent. The fact that both communities, either for private or religious interests, or for any other reasons that need not concern us here, were not able to find a consensus might have grieved him immensely. He might have known all along that sooner or later the British would withdraw; what he might not have known was that it would have to be done by sacrificing the territory's own unity. Forster goes back to his first contact with old India, as if somehow nostalgic, as well as to the ties of affection with it. His loving friend Ross Massood is recalled as the primary reason that led him to India in the first place, the same way that the late Maharajah of Dewas Senior was the force that made him return. The message is to those who are gone and extended to those who remain and to them he wishes "happiness and strength, and peace" (Forster, 1947, p.394).

The writer then turns his attention to culture. Without wanting to embark in direct political considerations and notwithstanding the fact that he does not want to mingle with the politics of the new born countries, thus maintaining a staid, sober distance, he goes on to emphasise the cultural aspects to be observed in the two countries now coming into existence, in what we may take as warnings to those in governmental positions. His mind now turns to his fellow writers on that side of the Globe and the necessity of some kind of Society of Authors to be created, and he directly addresses the new empowered governments. In his speech, he does not neglect the references to the visual arts, "architecture, ancient heritage, music, antiquities" almost displaying some sort of misgivings vis-à-vis the future of India and Pakistan, that petty questions will hinder them to pursue their duty. Forster seems to be quite aware of the reputation he enjoys amongst not only the Indian audiences but also the Indian intellectuals, and that his broadcast was not innocent as far as ideology was concerned. On the other hand, how lucid he was about future contradictions and conflicts between the two communities!

Forster was a democrat, a liberal humanist, supporting his own thought on the individual rather than on the collective action, genuinely convinced that the individual actions were the means for bettering the world under any conditions and at any time. He made of "personal relations" the cornerstone of his ideological thought, and art and culture the means to attain appeasement and fight tyranny. An oasis within chaos, we could say. Born

under the reign of Queen Victoria, he seems to have wanted to keep tradition and somehow maintain the *status-quo,* while, at the same time, not denying the necessity for evolution and change.

CHAPTER 3

A Room of His Own – Forster's Modernism

3 Is Forster a Modernist?

When trying to study an author, it is not unusual to analyse his or her work by attempting some kind of taxonomy, of division into ordered categories or systems to facilitate one's proposed task. With E.M. Forster such task does not seem to be easy at all. One may question his position as a modernist, and one may not class him as a Victorian either, but it does not seem out of place to consider both when regarding his work.

To approach the issue of Modernism applied to Forster one may have to look into his work as a whole and not only into his novels, most of which written before the First World War, but also into his essays, loose texts and short stories. *A Passage to India* was from all his six great novels the only one to be produced after the First World War. Its publication dates from 1924, and unfortunately dictated the end of his career as a novelist, though not as a writer and intervening intellectual. The reasons why he gave up his writing as a novelist are not completely perceptible or clear, but we may attempt a plausible explanation. In our judgement the reasons why he was not any more so keen on writing a great novel had not so much to do with the fact that, as Wendy Moffat suggests in her book on Forster's life, a question of not being able to write the same kind of novels he had done so far, heterosexual loves, like in *A Room with a View* or *Howards End*, since he had experienced love, homosexual love, already at the age of 38, in Egypt, and therefore this fact might have worked as an impediment to carry on writing about a subject of which he had no deep knowledge. He, according to Moffat, said so (Moffat, 2010, p.6). He might have been a greater and more prolific writer had he not been in love, it is her belief: he gave up writing in favour of love.

What Moffat saw in his diaries was not different from what we did see; this discouragement can already be traced back to 1910, and refers to a different companion. After complaining that he could not read and that he had lost inspiration "and not adequately replaced it by solidity" he ends up "My brain watches me, but it's literary. Let me keep clear from criticism, a scheming. Let me be him. You have stopped me. I can only think of you, and not write" to finally end up the entry poignantly with "I love you, Syed Ross Masood: LOVE" (Forster, s.d. [manuscript])[25]. Before this assertive tone, we do not entirely dismiss Moffat's idea, but in our opinion, it was but circumstantial, and therefore not the real cause, or at least the only cause, for such a decision, or rather, behaviour. It might have been true that for a while he was unproductive due to this infatuation, this time with his Egyptian lover, Mohamed el-Adle, which seems only too normal under these circumstances, but it is worth noting that *A Passage to India* was published some fourteen years after this assertion in his diary and some five years which mediate between the end of the war and the

[25]This is unpublished material and part of the Forster's papers kept at King's College, Cambridge - Vol. 4/4 Forster's papers EMF, page 4 Archives King's College 31st December, 1909 to 1910. These documents were accessed in March 2012 with the kind assistance of the archivist in charge, Patricia McGuire.

separation from his Arab companion. The book could only have been accomplished the way it was because, in our view, he had had contact with the reality of Egypt. And what a shame that he was not able to write a "Passage to Egypt" as well, that he was not able to use all his potential to overtly and definitely say what only he could have said! It was precisely the experience of India together with that of Egypt that made him so thoroughly aware of the politics of imperialism.

Correspondence exchanged later between Morgan Forster and Christopher Isherwood suggests that the reason why he lost inspiration may well have to do with the historical moment and the social and political conditions he was undergoing – and we can only guess that it was so all the way through his life. By the time the Second World War was making its path, Forster was already in his sixties, and rather vulnerable. It is somehow sad to read him (and with hindsight, since we know he was to live for thirty more years) when he confesses to Isherwood, in a letter dated 31st January, 1940 that "I wish I could write one more book myself, and may still be young enough to have it forced out of me by suffering, wisdom is not a sufficient impetus by itself." (Zeikowitz, 2008, p.92). It was a process much like that of giving birth, and which he did not feel competent to accomplish, also by sheer exhaustion, we dare say.

The Portuguese academic L. Leal de Faria, whose work on the author features his shorter pieces rather than his novels, finds it absurd "conjecturar sobre o que poderia ter sido a ficção de Forster depois de *Passage to India*, em termos de romance". And she goes further, in what one can envisage almost as a lament "O facto é que, do imenso potencial que se adivinha, apenas algumas narrativas curtas foram escritas, talvez porque a sua imaginação se pudesse desenvolver apenas numa Inglaterra onde a paz, os bosques e a liberdade existissem" (Faria, 1986, p.47). This thought is thus not so distant from what we have been arguing – as a man of peace, war hindered his capacities and grieved him immensely, the same way that liberty in its multifarious strands was always a constant element of his thought which he stood for all his life, and in the "greenwood" (did he not place Maurice Hall and his male companion in the "greenwood" as synonym for peace?!) he envisaged the return to simplicity, to a certain way of life without the interference of the constraints of modern society as a means to shun chaos and restore peace.

3.1 Forster in Egypt

The First World War, and particularly – because also personal - the issue of Egypt, seem to have been decisive in helping to change Forster's outlook on colonialism and, subsequently, the definite choice of sides. If at the beginning of his stay in that country he was somehow at a loss in what concerns that culture and its people, he came later to change his attitude. Maybe it is of some interest at this point to refer to a letter he wrote from Egypt in August 1916 - quite sometime after his arrival there – to his friend Malcolm Dowling which expresses his endeavour to understand the way he reacts to the Egyptian people's ways. In it, he also reflects upon the motives that led him into feeling the way he felt, to

what extent his western self, with all the colonial prejudices connected with that fact together with an all-pervading established power can sully the minds of conscious and good-will individuals mattered in his outlook. He had been in India before, and he seems not to have felt that discomfort vis-à-vis the Indians and the Indian ways. Here is what he says:

> "I hate the place, or rather its inhabitants. This is interesting, isn't it, because I came inclined to be pleased and quite free from racial prejudices, but in 10 months I've acquired a distinctive dislike to the Arab voice, the Arab figure, the Arab way of looking or walking or pump shitting or eating or laughing or anything – exactly the emotion that I censured in the Anglo-Indian towards the native there. What does this mean? Am I old, or is it the war, or are these people intrinsically worse? Anyhow I better understand the Anglo-Indian irritation though I'm glad to say I'm as far as ever from respecting it!! It's damnable and disgraceful, and it's in me." (Jeffreys, 2009, p.5)[26]

He came to change his mind dramatically, and, in his sober way, he tried to join the cause of that people, then under the British rule. In Egypt he witnessed imperialism from within, on the terrain where it was operating, and he became involved in a way he had never been while in India. His intrinsic predisposition to honesty would not have allowed him to overview the issue. He experienced it, there where it was unquestionably made clear. His involvement in the cause of those people, as we shall see at a further stage, account for his clear mindedness and sense of justice.

Born as he was in a prosperous and powerful England, with its class differences, public schools, trade unions and a huge Empire, there came a time of wars, of generalized bellicose conflict. And most important of all, he had experienced the deeds of the Empire itself. India, as a colony and the object of British colonization, does not stand alone in Forster's concerns. The then young writer also toiled with the question of Egypt.

Egypt had been occupied by the British in the later period of the 19th century (1882) as a result of the victorious outcome of the British invasion of that country, then a part of the Turkish Ottoman Empire, but mismanagement and corruption, the British thought it better to secure what they, along with the French, had invested in - the construction of the Suez Canal which had taken ten years to be accomplished and was finished in 1869. It would secure the easy and direct way of both Britain and France to their possessions in Asia - India and Australia in the case of Britain, and Indochina in the case of France. Egypt was thus to be his second colonial dwelling. As a conscientious objector he was not to partake in this war. He then accepted to serve in Egypt as a member of the British Red Cross, at the outbreak of World War One (this issue will be further developed in this work). E.M. Forster was to remain in Egypt for over three years - 24th April, 1919 his entry in his diary reads "I was over three years in Egypt, returning on January 31st this year" (Forster, s.d. [manuscript], p.49)[27]. Apart from his personal relations in the colony, also to be dealt with later in this work, he was to become politically active.

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[26] This passage of Forster's letter is quoted from Forster's letters in *The Forster-Cavafy Letters – Friends at a Slight Angle*, edited by Peter Jeffreys, by the American University in Cairo Press, in the year 2009.
[27] This information was found in the unpublished materials – See Archive Documents reference.

This statement is made explicit in a political and very critical document, published in 1921, so even before the publication of *A Passage to India* (which constitutes Appendix 1 of M. Shaheen's (2004) *E.M. Forster and the Politics of Imperialism*) named *The Government of Egypt: Recommendations by a Committee of the International Section of The Labour Research Department*[28].

E. M. Forster thus had witnessed the performance of the Empire in India, and he witnessed it in Egypt too, and the way the political and social climate that evolved during and after the First World War in the latter country added to Forster's consciousness and was judged by him to be totally unacceptable. Moffat also acknowledges this reality when stating that "The baby Morgan, always sickly, had died." (Moffat, 2010, p.179), and in fact this realisation is linked to very serious events held in Egypt already after the War and after his leaving the territory. The generalised hunger and unemployment among the population, the state of poverty and injustice whose victims were the defenceless working people, led the Egyptians to demonstrate their discontent and manifest their revolt in the streets of the big cities which gave rise to riots that were subsequently smothered by the British occupiers by means of unprecedented violence, hundreds killed only in the Cairo uprisings, people being forced to work in the fields supposedly as "volunteers" to which illegal detentions were added (Moffat, 2010, p.178).

The whole situation had directly affected his lover Mohamed El-Adle who was subsequently to write to Forster saying he wished Forster were an American since he had "noticed a bad habit to English during the Court Martial. The English are revengable[29]. And corrupt", these were El-Adle's conclusions after having had contact with the British authorities which he was to make known to his English friend when the latter was already in England; and El-Adle further states that he "found in the dictionary that English means cruel" (Moffat, 2010, p.179). Moffat also acknowledges an "impassionate" letter Forster wrote to the *Manchester Guardian* under the title *The Trouble in Egypt*, where he classified the British policies as "brutal" and "disgraceful" (Moffat, 2010, p.179). So, Forster the innocent, the baby and the dreamer had definitely died! The themes he had so far dealt with in his pre-war novels, his own sweet disposition, were things of the past. The material conditions by which he was surrounded hindered him from taking up his writing and creative activities again in the same pattern. Rural settings, middle-class entertainment, charming Italy or happy marriages seem to have lost importance before such catastrophic situation; they seem to be reminiscent of a world he knew had been left behind. Moffat refers to "Morgan's strange broken-backed career" also to the "unspoiled country-side settings, the oh-so-English people with their white linen suits, the clever repartee" (Moffat 2010, p.6). There came a time when it was necessary to part with it, with that Englishness so

[28] The Labour Research Department was founded in 1912 and came into existence with the aim to work in cooperation with Labour or Socialist movements or other co-operative movements. Forster's text was written in 1921. See Annexe 3.

[29] El-Adle misspells the word 'revengeable', he writes 'revengable', the fact must be due to his problems in mastering the English language, we believe.

characteristic of him, and give up resisting the pressures of the modern world, but rather face them, and take sides. And so he did. He definitely sided with the cause of the Egyptian people – including, of course, his Egyptian lover - as seen above. His friendship with the Greek poet Constantine Cavafy[30] was also not alien to his gradual and sound understanding of life in that country.

A disrupted Europe, scenery of successive armed conflicts and the absurdity of the world around him, the crazy world of wars and violence which dictated the fate of some of his friends and their consequent separation, may have been the real impediment, without, as said before, dismissing the fact that by initiating a love life he might have felt he had lost inspiration and be, as it were, distracted. But, as far as our understanding goes, the fact really had more to do with the political circumstances he went through. Conflicts such as the First World War, that, followed by the Spanish Civil War and the Sino-Japanese War[31] (where his friends - Christopher Isherwood and W. H. Auden - went to report and which was materialised in *Journey to a War*) and by the failure of the League of Nations in keeping peace, the breaking of the Second World War with dreary and devastating consequences for the whole world and mankind, so dramatically changed his life. The need to find some sort of balance, of understanding among men, in order to keep the world a more peaceful place was pressing, and left no room for meditation.

What called our attention, and somehow helped in our judgement, when scrutinising

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[30] Constantine Cavafy (1863-1933) was born in Alexandria of Greek ancestry. For family reasons, he moved to England at the age of nine where he remained until he was sixteen, thus being partly educated there. Having swiftly passed Constantinople (1982-1985) he then moved back to his native Alexandria where he remained until his death in 1933. Cavafy is considered to be one of the most outstanding poets of the Modern Greek language. Like E. M. Forster, he was a homosexual. He was a valuable element who animated Alexandria's literary life, although he published very little during his lifetime. Some of his poetry passed amongst a circle of friends in loose sheets and little booklets he made, some other was published in periodical papers. For some reason which is not quite clear, he was reluctant to have his work published, much to the grief of Forster, who spared no efforts to have his work published in England. Peter Jeffreys, the editor of *The Forster-Cavafy Letters*, refers to this 'detail' in the introduction of the *Letters*: "One aspect of the Forster-Cavafy friendship that strikes the reader of these letters is the relentless push on Forster's part to launch Cavafy's literary career…. With this very end in mind, Forster embarked on a great promotional campaign…" which, according to Jeffreys, "did more for Cavafy than the poet could ever have done for Forster in return" (Jeffreys, 2009, p.3). But notwithstanding the commitment on Forster's part, Cavafy seemed not to be ready to let go of his poetry to a broader public. In Jeffreys's words "the even more vexing question remains as to why Cavafy, given all Forster's efforts and auspicious connections – T.S. Eliot, T.E. Lawrence, and Leonard Woolf were enlisted to this publishing project – remained seemingly uninterested" (Jeffreys, 2009, p.16). For this letter, see Annexe 4. The poet dismissed the matter on the grounds of something to do with the translation of his erotic poetry, which for us today, and for Forster then, is somehow disconcerting and perplexing. Cavafy's poetry eventually made its way in England due to the English writer's endeavour throughout the years, first by having some of Cavafy's poetry published in several periodicals – translations by George Valassopoulo – and, in 1951, a whole volume came out – translated by John Mavrogordato – with the seal of Woolf's Hogarth Press (see Annexe 5). Cavafy seemed to be more interested to make his voice heard to the future generations rather than to his own in his lifetime. His work, through the English translations, was widely accepted and Forster seemed to have finally accomplished the task he had set forth.

[31] The Sino-Japanese War took place between July 1937 and September 1945. The belligerents were Japan – an Empire, which for long years had cherished wishes of dominating China both politically as well as militarily in order to take advantage of the economic resources of the country, and the Republic of China. Up to 1941 the conflict was circumscribed to the two countries, but with the Japanese attack to the United States naval base of Pearl Harbour, the war turned into a conflict of a wider scope. This was also the entry of the USA in the Second World War.

some materials in the Forster Archives in the King's College Library[32] was the fact that during the Second World War he seemed to have been quite depressed and taken by a certain sadness which might have kept him away from his writing. During World War Two his entries were scarce and when he dared to write, it was just to manifest feelings of indignation or sadness, like for instance that of the 22nd August, 1940 "At Meldon a bomb fell on this [word unreadable] 250 casualties in the district, 100 dead. No lists published." And he ended this entry with Capital letters "WE HAVE LOST THE WAR". But in the years of World War I he had not been prolific either. In 1914 he started writing on the 14th of February, and wrote solely through the months of April, May, August, November and December. And in 1915 his most relevant entry was on the 27th April when he signalled "Rupert Brooke dead!". By reading such statement one could only acknowledge that the shock was clear, together with a feeling of hopelessness. Rupert Brooke was not only a fellow writer, but also a friend and contemporary of Forster's at Cambridge where he was also, like Forster, a member of the Apostles[33]. It seems clear, according to Anita Desai, that they were friends and nurtured a mutual respect. Desai, in the forward note of Forster's *Arctic Summer* edition - arguably written between 1912 and 1913 - would refer to the poet this way: "...Brooke, the golden-headed boy of Cambridge who went to war and died" (Forster, 2003, p.viii). Forster's last entry was in October only to take up again in 1919. The war was already over and he had come home: "April 24th – I was over 3 years in Egypt, returning on January 31 this year." Later, already during the Second World conflict, in letters to Christopher Isherwood he was to express the feeling of hopelessness, which was not so strange in a disrupted world like that then. On the 16th June, 1944 he spoke freely to his friend "…how disgusting, how difficult not to grumble in a war's 5th year, how impossible for me to create a book. I wonder whether you, by sheer willpower, will succeed, as you intend to do."! (Zeikowitz, 2008, p.128).

The war had made the creative process impossible. Twenty years had already gone

[32] See Archive Documents references.

[33] The Cambridge Apostles, or Cambridge Conversazione Society, is a secret society, composed of Cambridge male undergraduates mostly originated in St John's, King's and also Trinity Colleges - women were to be accepted as members only in the 1970's decade -, founded by George Tomlinson, a St. John's College undergraduate in 1820 when the society was founded. Tomlinson was later to be the first bishop of Gibraltar. Among the undergraduates that became outstanding figures of the English intellectual scene that belonged to the Apostles we may, as an example, name some of the members of the Bloomsbury Group, such as Leonard Woof, Litton Strachey, also his brother James Strachey, John Maynard Keynes and E. M. Forster. Julian Bell, Virginia and Leonard Woolf's oldest nephew, was later to become a member too. Bertrand Russell and Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson were amongst the most brilliant older Apostles. It was supposed to be an intellectual group that met to discuss mainly philosophical, ethical or metaphysical issues. They possessed, according to Stansky and Abrahams, "a certain elitist point of view towards the world" (1966, p.13). We dare think that the "format" resembles that of a Free Masonry irregular lodge. Politics were almost taboo in the group debates, so during the worse years of the Second World War, the society interrupted its activities. Stephen Spender was to refer to this "detail" years later in his *The Thirties and After* by acknowledging that "the Apostles – which had such close connection with literary Bloomsbury, agreed in the twenties that 'practical politics were beneath discussion'. In the early thirties, the Apostles ceased for some years to exist as a result of the pressure of 'too many conflicting political believes among their members'" (Spender, 1978, p.187). He further stated that " … to Julian Bell, no longer then an undergraduate, and to John Cornford, who was one, this must have seemed like saying that having at last something to discuss, the Apostles had decided to discuss nothing" (1978, p.187).

by since the publication of the *Passage*. And how intense, both in personal and in political terms, these two decades had been! Stephen Spender was to express a similar feeling of discouragement vis-à-vis his own work as an activist during the same period. Although Spender took on an actively political role, travelling around England representing the anti-fascist (and communist) position, or joining the London fire brigade, also in a letter to Isherwood, he wonders whether this kind of work makes sense in such a turbulent and controversial world, and he further admits that writing might be the right ground where the struggle should take place (Spender, 1980, p.123).The war, it is true, consumed his time and energy and he kept his writing in abeyance for some time, but fortunately not so radically as Forster – for example, his *Ruins and Visions* came out in 1942, in the middle of the War. Morgan Forster was to live for forty six years after the publication of *A Passage to India*, his last novel.

In closing, it is worth referring that Egypt was the inspirational source for some of Forster's most charming non-fictional narratives, among which is *Alexandria – A History and a Guide*, and this "brings me to Cavafy. One of the joys of those years was my friendship with the great Greek poet who so poignantly conveys the civilisation of his chosen city" (Forster, 1982, p.xvii). Included in the 1982 edition of Forster's Alexandria is a short text by Michael Haag which in so many ways expresses what that place meant for Morgan Forster and how gradually he came to love it and to find actual beauty as well as links with past and present realities, and that much Forster owes Cavafy: "The 'sights' of Alexandria are in themselves not interesting, but they fascinate when we approach them through the past" (1982, p.238), says he in a letter to a friend, and in our view once one knows the past one can better tackle the present. El-Adle, Cavafy, Alexandria altogether enabled him to form his own judgement and act accordingly.

3.2 *A Passage to India* - Forster and Imperialism

A Passage to India was thus a much more powerful work than anything he had written so far. It was of a larger and more universal scope – the issues now became imperialism and colonialism. Had he not been to British India and seen how imperialism operated? Had he not witnessed the British entering Egypt and occupying its territory solely for the sake of British interests? Had he not experienced the deeds of the white occupier? Had he not seen the British soldiers aiming at Turkey losing their lives by the thousands at Gallipoli? "I should never have known an Englishman could be like that if I had not met you"; the words are El-Adle's in Forster's Fictitious Letter to Mohammed El-Adle (Shaheen, 2004, p.184), which, to a great extent, denounce the behaviour of the British occupier vis-à-vis the endogenous/native populations. *A Passage to India* may also have dictated the end of his previous style as a novelist, and most certainly the usual issues that so characterized his up to then fiction, relationships that end with a comedic conclusion – marriage, landscapes and countryside, the "greenwood", as he called it. This powerful work may thus account as his most overtly political and true modernist work – the Empire and its relations with his

Majesty's subjects in India, the whole functioning of the imperial system, the failure to reach out for a culture and a civilization that, for obvious reasons, had not attained the stage of England; we are here referring to the technological developments, industrialism and all that it drags along on its way. His favourite dictum "Only connect" in the end proved ineffective, it did work though in personal terms. K. Natwar-Singh makes it clear in his essay on Forster *Only-Connect…: Forster and India*. Natwar Singh finds it almost impossible to write "a dispassionate appraisal", as he says "Just as he found it impossible to resist India, his friends find it impossible to resist him. I have had the good fortune of calling Mr Forster a friend for fifteen years; it is largely to him that I owe such awakening as has befallen me." (Natwar-Singh, 1987, p.45).

E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India* stands in contradiction with Walt Whitman's long poem of the same title. It is worth analysing briefly Whitman's poem. To make use of this analogy is certainly not original. We owe this to David Medalie, who calls attention precisely to the antagonist feelings that presided over the work of both writers that share the same title. It is as if Whitman expressed some kind of urgency that had badly to be fulfilled, as very early in the poem, in his third stanza:

> Passage to India!
> Lo, soul! Seest thou not God's purpose from the first?
> The earth to be spann'd, connected by net-work,
> The people to become brothers and sisters,
> The races, neighbours, to marry and be given in marriage, the oceans to be cross'd,
> The distant brought near,
> The lands to be welded together.

(Whitman, 1973, p.183)

In it, Whitman's wish to reconcile is distinctly expressed, the end of separation in favour of togetherness, clarity as opposed to secrets, affection to sooth man's hearts, until "The whole earth, this cold, impassive, voiceless earth, shall be completely justified …" (Whitman, 1973, p.184). This was Whitman's hope and desire. Whitman's wish to "reconcile", "to get closer", "to communicate" as opposed to Forster's impossible "reconciliation", impossible "approach" of any kind – sexual (Fielding), religious, racial, cultural, and so on – and in the last analysis what leads to the end of the novel itself – no one seems to have attained anything: Mrs Moore leaves India, saddened by the course of events just to die at sea. Adela is also the portrait of sadness. She undergoes dire experiences before she finally can find some peace and quiet and ultimately, already in England, work out the scope of the issues that were at stake when faced with the cultural and class differences in order to find the balance she needs to carry on. India had changed her – as Egypt had changed Forster. Aziz learnt that there is no bargaining with the occupier. He acquired the consciousness of the colonised before the deeds of the coloniser. Fielding, who sought a close and, who knows, a possible physical relation with Aziz, cannot attain such goal, and finally Ronny, who failed to have understood further than what was "just" to be a civil servant at the service of His Majesty miles away from home, and in the most careless

possible way. He understood nothing of the Indian culture or of the Indian ways, nor was he interested in doing so; he was incapable of approaching the "other" man. He was the portrait of the English supremacy who did not seek to be otherwise, unlike Cyril Fielding.

In *A Passage to India*, Forster "conceives" Fielding, if one lets aside the last part of the novel, as close as possible to himself. He is, so to speak, the herald of the *Passage*, as if announcing that a change is possible. Fielding appears all the way through the novel as a humanist of the old kind for whom race seems not to be an issue and for whom racial barriers can be overcome. He is the one – like Forster himself – to be opened to making friends with Indians and to having a critical eye vis-à-vis the other Anglo-Indians, as, for example, in his attitude when Aziz faces trial on the grounds of accusations which are far from clear. He acts rationally even though he has to put up with the perplexity and even contempt of the English community. Categorizations on the grounds of race is something he cannot accept and, if he sides with Aziz's cause, it is just because he believes in his innocence, and not because he is Indian. He is faithful to his liberal humanist values; respect and sense of justice thus prevail over and above anything else. He is the one who questions the English conventions which maintain that same community apart from a people they, themselves, colonise on the grounds of a supposedly legitimate superiority which touches the boundaries of disrespect – for a people, for a culture, and, ultimately, for the human kind as a whole. Like Forster, Fielding also believes that through rationality, which education helps to promote, matters can be discussed and understanding achieved, therefore he does his best in his capacity as a teacher and educator, and understands his role as someone who, while occupying such post, is in the position to supply the Indians with the intellectual tools which enable them to eventually reflect upon their own condition as subjects of the British crown, and eventually act consequently. He has doubts as for his civilizing "assignment" as part of the Empire's mission, so, the Fielding character, somehow, seeks to subvert the established order, though in a very sober, mild and subtle manner. Although for the representatives of the Empire in India, Fielding appears almost as a "destabilizing" character, he is no revolutionary trying to change the *status quo* altogether.

Towards the end of the novel, Fielding's character undergoes some considerable changes. If throughout the work he advocates friendship as his favourite realm to establish personal relations, it is almost awkward that he should fall in love (with a woman – though a special one) and get married thus necessarily creating a gap between his new and old life, and why not, with new and old self. One can only imagine him in his native England leading a comfortable bourgeois life, and enjoying whatever the system may grant someone who had served the Empire for so long a period. He seems to have given in to the established patterns and to have lost some of the grip and energy to fight against the inequities originating in the colonial rule and thus procured a comfortable place for himself, more in tune with the English ways. And here, his creator parted with him, not only because marriage for the author is almost "quick-sands", but because Fielding seems to be irrevocably adjusting to the English manners. One thing though seems to be common to both men, Forster and Fielding –

a remote disbelief in the Indians' capabilities to manage a process of independence, let alone live independently, at least "not yet".

Forster's *Passage to India* is, in fact, just "a visit", or for that matter a real "passage", in the sense of "not remaining", to India since all possible attempts to cover the distance, both human and geographical, seem to have failed with Forster, hence Edward Said's, we would not say criticism, but rather lament and perplexity when referring to the end of the novel "No not yet, and the sky said, No, not there" (Said, 1994: 200). And Said goes on "Consider [first] *A Passage to India*, a novel that surely expresses the author's affection for the place" and further wonders, speaking about Fielding's inherent opposition in *A Passage to India*, that "he cannot put his objections against the inequities of British rule in political or philosophical terms…." (1994, p.200), which sounds so much like Morgan Forster himself.

Said attempts to find justification in the novel as a genre, since it is clear how sympathetic he is regarding its author, to argue that "*A Passage to India* is at a loss partly because Forster's commitment to the novel form exposes him to difficulties in India he cannot deal with." And further asserts that "….it is also true that Forster's India is so affectionately personal and remorselessly metaphysical…." (1994, pp.200-201). Shaheen (2004, p.5) was to point out that Forster's masterpiece was "acknowledged with some reservation by Said". Shaheen, himself, understands that "Politics form the crucial structure of the novel and a serious commitment on the part of the author" (2004, p.5). We do not doubt for a moment of the conclusion drawn by Shaheen. But why then not being more explicit? This is also what leads to an idea of Forster, whose anti-colonialist feelings have never been put in question, as a non-committed individual, a certain ambivalence as somehow still belonging to the Victorian kind, and ultimately, and surely involuntarily, being the voice of continuity, the voice of the established values of the Empire of which he was always so critical, especially as far as imperialism/colonialism is concerned.

The question, in our assessment, remains that of understanding whether he underestimated the potentialities of the Indian people to lead their own struggle towards liberation and independence and their own destiny or whether he remotely believed in the superiority of the British culture. Why should the struggle for independence from colonial/imperial rule remain in abeyance in Forster's novel? On the other hand, we have Morgan Forster, through Dr Aziz making clear that "India shall be a nation! No foreigners of any sort! Hindu and Moslem and Sikh and all shall be one! Hurrah! Hurrah for India" (Forster, 1976a, p.317). But Aziz was not to mingle with the British; that much he had learnt. The British failed him in what might have been his good will towards the coloniser to whom he showed, to some extent, some subservience – the question of the collar when Fielding needed one, the whole trip to the Marabar Caves at his own expenses, and his waiting at the train station since the night before the trip just to guarantee that the English ladies would not have to be kept waiting (Forster, 1976a, p.127); these are just a couple of instances of an almost innate predisposition to serve and in the ultimate analysis to obey. He had to

undergo too many harsh and enduring experiences to finally and most definitely understand about the impossibility of "togetherness". And at Fielding's final invitation of friendship: - "Why can't we be friends now? It's what I want. It's what you want" - (Forster, 1976a, p.317), and despite his demonstration of affection, it was not possible. They "only" could not "connect", and Aziz knows it. Ultimately, to Aziz, Fielding personifies the colonizer, and this understanding he seems to have reached even if through a painful process. Or as Aimé Césaire[34] would put it: "Les colonisés savent désormais qu'ils ont sur les colonialistes un avantage. Ils savent que leurs «maîtres» provisoires mentent. Donc que leurs maîtres sont faibles" (2004, p.8). Fielding's liberal humanism, his education, his will, like Forster's, to "connect" were not sufficient to win Aziz back. It seems Dr Aziz had finally understood how "feeble" the coloniser was. And this assertion has no intention whatsoever to minimise Fielding's earnest efforts to get closer. The same is also true for Mrs Moore, or even Adela, before the unfortunate episode of the Marabar Caves. With hindsight, Forster's words or, more precisely, Aziz' words can almost be read as a foreboding to what was to come. The writer did live to witness the independence of India, but, alas, also its divide[35].

It is worth noting that Edward Said reminds us that "western writers until the middle of the twentieth century, whether Dickens or Austen, Flaubert or Camus, wrote with an exclusively western audience in mind, even when they wrote of characters, places or situations that refer to, made use of, overseas territories held by Europeans", and Said (1994) goes further pointing out that even Raymond Williams, from whom one might have expected an open debate on the question, keeps the matter of imperialism in abeyance in all of his works. This may all be true, but what we do infer from the re-reading and re-interpretation of Forster's novel is that unlike other writers, whether his contemporaries or writers before him, like Jane Austen or Dickens, where the phenomenon of imperialism is mentioned as a matter of course, taken for granted, and, to remain with Said, because "it can be" (1994, p.66), Forster deals with the issue directly. And "it can be" because the British *de facto* held the power there, and clearly, for E. M. Forster, imperialism is a real and open issue of which he is well aware, and also fertile ground for confrontation, a ground where power relations can be tested. This is, alas, what makes Forster a universal writer - dealing with broader issues in detriment of the comedic novels featuring the English society, mainly the English rural society, he had written so far. The theme here is manifestly of a wider scope, at a much more global level, it extends beyond frontiers. From Britain to

[34] Aimé Césaire (1913-2008) was a French speaking poet and theoretician, also a politician, from Martinique. In the thirties' in France, together with Léopold Senghor (1906-2001), who later became president of Senegal, and other black intellectuals, founded the 'négritude' movement in Francophone literature. He was a major influence for the young Frantz Fanon, the acclaimed author of *The Wretched of the Earth* (*Les Damnés de la Terre*), first published in 1961, and a milestone in literature about colonialism.

[35] The Indian Independence Act 1947, as it was called - Through this Act of the British Parliament, India, till then under the sovereignty of the British, was partitioned into two different countries – Pakistan and India, which were to come into existence as such on the 14th and 15th August, 1947 respectively – the negotiations were attended by the India National Congress, the Muslim League and the Sikh community and, of course the British Government with Clement Attlee as Prime Minister.

Portugal, going through France, imperialism was a reality. Europe was irrevocably linked to it. And Forster himself was also aware, for intellectual honesty as well as personal experience, that colonization was what Aimé Césaire meant when he wrote:

> "…ni évangélisation, ni entreprise philanthropique, ni volonté de reculer les frontières de l'ignorance, de la maladie, de la tyrannie, ni l'élargissement de Dieu, ni l'extension du Droit." (Césaire, 2004, p.9)

He was also well aware that the Martinican poet and theoretician was right when he stated that:

> "…le grand responsable dans ce domaine [colonisation] est le pédantisme chrétien, pour avoir posé les équations malhonnêtes: christianisme = civilisation; paganisme = sauvagerie, d'où ne pouvaient que s'ensuivre d'abominables conséquences colonialistes et racistes, dont les victimes devaient être les Indiens, les Jaunes, les Nègres." (Césaire, 2004, p.10)

It will be worth noting at this point that the equation proposed by Aimé Césaire is majestically sanctioned by Mario Vargas Llosa, the 2010 Literature Nobel Prize winner, in his *Dream of the Celt* (2010) where he recuperates the story of the British council, Roger Casement, in Congo in the very beginning of the twentieth century, which is none other than that of the history of the colonization of Congo carried out by the men of the Belgian King Leopold II. The astounding crimes Casement witnessed account for what Césaire called "sauvagerie", but this time imposed upon the native populations of that immense territory by the Belgians. As an Irishman, and later activist in favour of the independence of the Eire from the London rule, Casement was to end up in the gallows. The rumours of his homosexuality, in a country still highly conservative and with the Labouchère Amendment full in force, together with the strong prejudice vis-à-vis the issue, might have hindered some people from signing the petition for the commutation of his capital sentence. Many influential people – George Bernard Shaw amongst them – dared to do so, but it seems that, for example, Joseph Conrad, who had been a close friend of Casement's, felt uneasy to support him. We tend to think that, in the case of Conrad, the reasons might have been imminently political, or, at least we would like to think they were.

Susan Brownmiller (1977), the American sociologist and feminist, was later to refer to the "sauvagerie" of the Belgian soldiers in the Belgian Congo during the liberation war, led mainly by the Mouvement National Congolais – Lumumba, in her major work *Against our Will - Men, Women and Rape* (1977). Brownmiller, whose study approaches gender discrimination, speaks of the atrocities perpetrated by the European soldiers and whose most direct victims were the Congolese women. Also, one of the most hideous crimes carried out by the Europeans in Africa was that of the assassination – and to remain in the same territory – of the first elected Congolese Prime Minister, Patrice Lumumba, already in 1961, barely one year after the independence of the country. Ludo de Witte, in his work *The assassination of Lumumba* (2001), where he describes the stages of the Belgian authorities that led to Lumumba's assassination in some Congolese forest, whose contours are, to say the least,

sinister and inhuman, is a good contribution towards the understanding of the colonization phenomenon.

Still apropos the equation set by Césaire – "christianisme = civilization; paganism = sauvagerie" – a parenthesis should be made at this stage. Justice should be done to E.M. Forster who dealt with the issue, not only in his major work *A Passage to India* where he profusely refers to it, but also in some other works the question deserved his careful attention, as, for example, *The Life to Come*[36], and *The Other Boat* too. In both stories he is to express most clearly what his concerns are and also his own position of overt rejection regarding certain features of his political and social environment of extremely constraining morals. Colonialism/imperialism, homosexuality, religion, class differences, social barriers, *mouers* and personal relations were realms he reflected upon and to which his attention was constantly turned. It certainly might have been easier for Forster to find within a colonial setting different ways in thought and behaviour that supplied him with fertile ground for confrontation with the established power and, ultimately, with political arguments to approach these issues, and also for his own fulfilment as a homosexual.

Both *The Life to Come* and *The Other Boat* deal with sexual relationships between males - and in this respect it is not different from *Maurice*, but the colonial bend of the two stories also take us back to his *Passage to India*, thus reinforcing the idea that those were crucial issues. There is also in both stories a certain violence which applies one way or another to the two major works mentioned. In the case of a *Passage to India*, violence comes in the form of blunt colonialism let alone the personal relations that are to be witnessed in many occasions of the narrative, i.e. "(…) he [Ronny] was not in India to behave pleasantly, and derive positive satisfaction therefrom!… The traces of young-man humanitarianism had sloughed off …" (Forster, 1976a, p.50), and in *Maurice* it is materialized, for example, in the mistrust, and, to some extent, a certain patronizing attitude of the upper class vis-à-vis Alec Scudder, the game keeper. Even the older servant seems to have learnt the master's classist ways:

> 'I'm no cricketer, Simcox. Who's your best bat?'
> 'We have no one better than the under gamekeeper.'
> 'Then make the under gamekeeper captain.'
> Simcox lingered to say, 'Things always go better under a gentleman'.
> (Forster, 2005, p.177)

Or still "I should never know what type of servant to select. Take Scudder for instance. What class of home does he come from?..." (Forster, 2005, p.182) or "'Scudder missed his boat?' cried the squire with indignation. 'These people are impossible'" (Forster, 2005, p.217), in a clearly implying mistrust in the "lower" classes.

In *The life to Come* one can see the *naïve* indigenous boy who trusts the white missionary from a civilization different from his own – "christianisme = civilization" as opposed to "paganism = sauvagerie" - which, in the case of the young indigenous boy, just

[36] *The Life to Come*, according to Forster's diary entry of the 25th March, 1923, was written as a memorial of his relationship with El-Adle, his Egyptian and first lover (see Archive Documents reference).

manifests itself in the form of love, free of any complex or guilt, faithful with no reservation, but which exceeds the "civilized" western missionary's capabilities to cope with, thus laying bare the limitations imposed upon the latter by his original environmental background. So, the "sauvage" in this case is but an amiable "sauvage", gay of course, infinitely honest who lets himself be destroyed by the western civilized man who was supposed to have come to spread faith to the "uncivilized" – but, alas, it was "ni évangilisation, ni entreprise philanthropique" (Césaire, 2004, p.9). This reality proved to be too complex for the missionary to accept and catastrophic consequences inevitably arose. It is thus in *The life to Come* as it is in *The Other Boat*. In the latter story Cocoanut lets himself be destroyed by the young officer, Lionel March. March has no colour prejudices whatsoever therefore, no personal reluctance, thus making a physical approach feasible and, more than that, pleasant and enjoyable, but his prejudices arise whenever other white western individuals are in sight – so the relationship is doomed to fail. In these stories it is as if Forster was haunted by the guilt the society and its *moeurs* imposed upon him. And it is not this way in the case of *Maurice* because Forster was absolutely determined to produce a piece of writing with two male protagonists – this time involving also an English middle class male individual, like himself, with another man of lower origins, as a functional substitute for the indigenous boys – with a happy outcome as he had witnessed in the case of Edward Carpenter and George Merrill. Any of *Maurice*'s endings are arguable in the sense that one can in no way envisage how those two creatures are going to lead their future lives, but they are happy, either in the boat house or in the "greenwood" – "and who can hope for more?" -, fulfilling this way Forster's wishes.

The historical reality and the historical context therefore play a role here –they directly interfere with the writer's choices, with the conscience and judgement he had of the matters in question, in short, it lays open the author's preoccupations. As far as colonialism is concerned, where Jane Austen, or Charlotte Brontë, just mention the issue as a *fait accompli*, since they are incapable of having any other approach for the reasons explained before, Forster elaborates on it.

That seems not to have been Forster's fault that his work is not more outspokenly clear. His fault, if fault there is, as Said in a way seems to imply, might have been rather that of being so unassertive in the points he really wanted to make or to call attention to. It is there that he lacks clarity which may sometimes be misleading and confused with ambiguity regarding his position. Did he have "a Western audience in mind"? We certainly believe he did. It may be of some interest to make a brief reference here to Mohamed Shaheen's book Appendix 4, entitled *Unpublished Conversation with E.M. Forster* which refers to a conversation between Forster, already aged 90, and the young Mohamed Shaheen, then a Cambridge undergraduate, which Malcolm Riley, a Cambridge graduate and the latter's friend, also joined. Riley was a biochemistry graduate student and a left-wing activist. When Shaheen questioned Forster whether "shouldn't Aziz be portrayed as a militant so that he might lead some national resistance against British sovereignty?!" it was

Riley, not Forster, who prompted an answer "Mr Forster was concerned with British in India and not Indians in India". And he added that "Mr Forster had followed them to see why they should be there in the first place", to which Forster smiled and commented "there is a grain of wisdom in what Riley said" (Shaheen, 2004, p.191).

This episode is quite illustrating and typical of Forster, hence finding it so convenient, and for that matter, intriguing and uncompromising. The question, obviously, remained to be answered. In a later meeting, Shaheen tried again to raise the issue, but, once again was not successful. Shaheen's reassessment, or "contrapuntal reading", just to borrow Said's words, of *A Passage to India* leads him into concluding that in fact it is "not about the British in India in the obvious sense, nor is it about national sentiments… but about the truth beyond the ordinary facts of crude imperialism and national resistance" (Shaheen, 2004, p.192), and this view seems to meet with our own judgement as far as this question is concerned, rather broadening the scope of the work. The material conditions Forster experienced both in Egypt and again later in India were responsible for the change in his way to envisage the question of the Empire. Consciously he was not moved by any kind of ideological presupposition let alone any political objective, but out of his own protected environment, under distinct socio-economic conditions, witnessing his own British fellowmen at work, it was inevitable that a change might occur in his outlook on life and politics. It does not require much effort from us to imagine how difficult Forster's endeavour towards the understanding of new realities presented before his eyes might have cost him, but, simply put, this is also political work! Politics, and political activity, in particular, no matter under which form it appears, involves moral values and moral judgements, and Forster was well aware of it, both in his literary work, as in the case of *A Passage to India*, and in his other activities, namely as a radio broadcaster, of which his talks at the BBC microphones are just a proof, broadcasting to India or simply supporting the British war effort during World War Two. Maybe Dionys Mascolo's[37] words can better illustrate what has just been expressed since his words seem to fit Forster, the intellectual, the writer, and the committed citizen perfectly:

> "Toute activité politique est de morale, engage avec soi l'univers des valeurs morales, et relève par suit du jugement moral. Tout pouvoir, tout régime, tout gouvernement peut toujours être réduit à son contenue morale et à la portée morale de ses actes. Les rapports entre les hommes, l'organisation de ces rapports, sont une affaire de morale. Toute activité intellectuelle, et même simplement littéraire, d'autre part, est de morale, et relève du jugement moral. Il n'y a pas d'exercice de la parole – si ce n'est d'une inimaginable pureté descriptive qui n'ait une portée morale. La parole même est un certain genre de pouvoir, que l'on n'a jamais qu'après avoir fait ce qu'il fallait pour le prendre. En d'autres termes: on ne peut ni régner, ni écrire innocemment. Cela s'expie." (Mascolo, 2004, p.86)

[37] Dionys Mascolo was a French writer and political activist throughout his life, from the times of the Second World War where he sided with the French 'résistence' against the Nazi occupation. His activities against the French colonialism in Algeria, together with his positions in the May 1968 students' revolt, where he sided with the students, until more recently against the money making society of the 1980's. Mascolo was born in 1916 and died in Paris on the 20th August 1997. He fathered Marguerite Duras's son Jean (Kirkup, 1997, p.32).

We can only but agree since Mascolo seems to have touched the right cord. Nothing in E.M. Forster is innocent, everything is the product of his profound moral judgment, and surely the conscience that what he possesses as a writer is a means of power, power to influence, power to make his ideas clear, those he advocated as morally correct. His options, and here let us stick again to Mascolo's word, are not "innocent" and not neutral. His participation in international meetings of writers or others, as in 1935 in Paris, which will be dealt with in more detail further in this work, or his choice of subjects according to the historical moment, at the service of the BBC, is highly illustrative. The publication, in 1924, of *A Passage to India* dealing with the Empire and its problems and specificities, after the imperialist campaigns of the First World War where Britain lost thousands of lives, was probably, we must say, his contribution, as agency, for a wider and more open debate on the issue of imperialism, more precisely of British imperialism. We may surely say that he did put the matter on the agenda. He, in fact, took advantage of the margin he thought possible, conscious or unconsciously, to open this delicate topic to broader debate.

The historical and cultural environment plays a strong part here; undeniably direct, in the case of E.M. Forster, indirect in the case of Jane Austen, or even Charlotte Brontë. While Austen or Brontë just mention India as a possible destiny, as, for example, in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eire* – "If I go to India, I go to premature death" (Brontë, 1994, p.340), "(…) must we part in this way, St. John? And when you go to India? Will you leave me so…?" or still "When I go to India, Jane? Will I leave you? What! Do you not go to India?" (1994, p.350) -, Forster's work elaborates on India. He had a profound knowledge of the colony and its people (as he had of Egypt) and was also animated by the conviction that imperialism was not the way or the alternative for the wellbeing of those peoples. So, both options are entirely the authors' choices as is the place that such an issue as this occupied in either intellect, or was for each of them a matter of deep concern. It seems also clear that the historical moment is paramount in presiding over those choices. It was not a matter to be spoken of at the dinner table of a rural Anglican priest's, the class the two women writers came from[38]; also there, and their artistic production so reveals, and following Macherey's thought, what is not written, the untold story, may and should be taken into consideration, what is written is not self-sufficient, and the book "is necessarily accompanied by a *certain absence"* (Callinicos, 2008, p.97*)*. There is perhaps more in what was not written than what was in fact explicit in their work. An alternative reading, or reading "against the grain" - as the cultural materialists would say - would be necessary there also to be able to find out, through their works, what kind of society, surrounded by what values, they really were and

[38] Austen or Brontë, daughters of Anglican pastors, with all the constraints of being women, writing in the nineteenth century, in a male oriented society, could hardly elaborate on politics with some degree of profoundness. This may raise some controversy and may be thought not to be thoroughly accurate, since, the name of Mary Wollstonecraft could be mentioned here, already in the previous century, but she had the advantage of her surroundings, which were surely not those of Anglican priests' daughters, and which might have played a crucial role in the difference between Wollstonecraft and the two other women writers. Wollstonecraft was the wife of the English philosopher William Godwin and an indefatigable advocate of women's rights and also an indefatigable activist against death penalty.

developed their lives and literary production in. We are, obviously referring here to those which are not explicit, but dwell in the text so that, for the sake of a more accurate judgement, "faultlines" should have to be found, and certainly, in the Brontë's example that was surely a fault line.

Forster's work as a novelist, prior to *A Passage to India*, seems to be informed of the traditional values of the English society where he originated from, and if he sometimes was so critical of that very society, he was at the same time, and ultimately, its supporter. This idea is better expressed in Randall Stevenson's essay entitled *Forster and Modernism* (Stevenson, 2007, p.219) when stating that "though a sharp critic of English society in his early fiction, Forster remains complicit with many of its values", and the editors of *Forster's BBC Talks* make no mystery about it and, rather sympathetically – sympathy that we can only share, for reasons that we shall clarify further in this work - in the introduction to the volume, present it as a matter of course recognising in him even nostalgic feelings vis-à-vis the nineteenth century:

> "Broadcasting would in some ways confirm Forster's status as an outsider to modernism; he is nostalgic in his talks, after all, lauding great minds of the past, promoting conservation of the English country side and national landmarks, and supporting democratic rather than socialist polity." (Lago, Hughes, Walls eds., 2008, p.9)

Sawston is presented as his background, the place where he was born and also grew up as a schoolboy, and that English upper-middle class society, which he was to so keenly criticise in an essay produced in *Abinger Harvest*, entitled *Notes on the English Character*[39] (1955), seems to have shaped his own features as a man, as a writer and, ultimately as a liberal humanist that he was to remain until his death at the age of ninety two.

Notes on the English Character is as much critical as it is praising. Forster matches the less sympathetic features of the English character, like "lack of imagination, hypocrisy" with "solidity, caution, integrity, efficiency", very middle-class, as he justifies. All this is reminiscent of the Industrial Revolution, of the 1832 Reform Bill and "they are connected with the rise and organisation of the British Empire" (Forster 1955, p.3), but again, the same middle-class which is responsible for the literature of the nineteenth century, he contends. And "hypocrisy", after all, may not have the same acceptation one may normally think. It is true the charge that England is "the island of hypocrites, the people who have built up an Empire with the Bible in one hand, a pistol in the other, and financial concessions in both pockets" (Forster, 1955, p.11), he agrees. But by hypocrisy "do we mean conscious deceit? Well the English are comparatively guiltless of this; they have little of the Renaissance villain about them", and he continues his argument preferring to find them guilty of "unconscious deceit", of "muddle-headedness" (Forster, 1955, p.11). And, ultimately, public-school education accounts for all of this, for this immense lack of clarity the common Englishman

[39] This essay was written in 1920, first published in 1936 and included in the *Abinger Harvest* selection. We used for our work a 1955 edition, published by The Noonday Press.

has to face himself with, according to Forster.

The *Longest Journey*, possibly the most autobiographical of his books, perfectly illustrates it. *A Room with a View*, *Howards End*, the rural elites, even *Maurice*, whose setting is shared between Maurice's home, a middle-class country house outside London, still Clive's estate, that like Maurice's is located in rural England, and Cambridge, form this triangle that sets the atmosphere and is obviously connected to his own. Interesting to note also is the end of *Maurice*, which leaves the reader wondering how and where those two lives together will develop: will they depart from Clive's estate, will they live and mingle in the big city, or will they even emigrate? This remains to be said[40]. But Forster, still before the First World War (1914) had decided – he set the two young men in a rural area, in the "greenwood", leading a not less rural life, away from the social constraints, and this is what the writer chose in the first place in the two other unpublished versions of *Maurice*'s epilogue.[41] There were no queries – they return to nature, and lead their lives in nature while they can. Forster would later refer to the end of nature as it was then. What now follows are the two unpublished Epilogues written between 1913 and 1914 – only with slight changes - and they both deal with Kitty's reflections, late in life, concerning her brother's sudden disappearance:

> "As the tea brought warmth to her mind, Kitty began recalling her brother's disappearance. She had never thrashed it out. 'Something too awful' had been hinted by her brother in law, who knew most, and had been in secret communication with Clive. Clive [hand written] would make no pronouncement, [cont. typed] and had refused point blank to see Mrs Hill and be questioned by her.[hand written] The two families drifted apart because old [typed] Mrs Durham and Pippa spread a rumour that Maurice had speculated on the Stock Exchange. This annoyed the Hills, for the boy, like his father, had always been most careful, and Kitty was allowed to write one of her sharp letters; she remembered its wording very clearly now. In the solitude of this Yorkshire inn.
>
> But what was the awful thing? Why a sane wealthy/unspiritual young man should drop overboard like a stone into the sea, and vanished? – Drop without preparation or farewell? The night of the wonderful sun set he had not returned to the vexation of Aunt Ida, now dead, who had desired a motor-ride, and on the morrow he was not at the office, nor at a dinner appointment with Clive. Beyond that she knew nothing, for masculinity had intervened. It was a man's business, Arthur had implied: women may weep but not ask to understand, and he warned them against communicating with the Police. She had wept duly, and comforted poor mother, but emotion had now been dead there many years, and Oh what was it? She longed to know. What force could have driven her brother into the wilderness?
>
> When she thought "He's not alone there: he's working under that other man," and with a flash but without a slightest shock the truth was revealed to her. "He must be very fond of his mate he must have given up us on his account, I should imagine they are practically in love". It seemed a very odd situation to her, one which she had never heard of and had better not mention, but the varieties of length are endless: it

[40]Ideas exchanged with Christopher Isherwood might have dictated this ending for *Maurice*. Christopher Isherwood started pressing Morgan Forster to work on *Maurice* again, as early as the beginnings of the 50's, so that it could be published. Forster seemed happy but also somehow fearful "I will have a try – humility my guide, I don't think though that I could write fiction – and of that type – anymore", he wrote to Isherwood in January, 1952 (Zeikowitz, 2008, p.149). They exchanged various letters where Forster would seek for advice regarding certain passages and chapters, and accepted most of the suggestions. In the end he was ravishing for letting Christopher Isherwood have the publication rights of *Maurice* in the United States (Zeikowitz, 2008, p.154).

[41] These are the two unpublished epilogues of *Maurice* found in the unpublished papers of E.M. Forster at King's College Library, identified as follows: EPILOGUE of *Maurice* (1st and 2nd) – the 1913-1914 version of *Maurice* – [1913-14] – Paper, 2 items in envelope Call Mark 1/5/2C/King's College Archive EMF Collection (see Archive Documents reference).

> did not seem a disgusting situation nor one that society should have outlawed changed when she spoke of the saw: it was the only remark that had moved him: abuse, entreaties, sermons, were all powerless against the desire to work properly with his friend. "Which saw?" Nothing else mattered, and he had left her.
>
> Well, and she didn't mind. He could if he liked. She had never cared for him, and didn't now, but she did understand him, and could dwell on him at last without irritation. She saw why he had always repelled her, in spite of surface-generosities, why she and her sister, and even their [?] lived in a state of war. What were their thoughts now? And as would take measures accordingly; a great pity this. As the point drew on the carpet bulged up in the wind, Kitty's own thoughts grew less sociological. In particular she began to think of the unknown friend as a human being, and to be interested in him. She felt that though more **commoner** [hand written to substitute **more uncultured**] than her brother he might be nicer to a woman, she liked his strong loose body, and the softness of his brown eyes, and wanted to see him again. He was the sort of person in whom all meet, so with unconscious felicity she expressed Alec's nature and almost without knowing it she found herself asking the landlady about the man who worked in the woods which she had bicycled. Her question was vague, as was the landlady's answer: there were no many woods, she implied, and no many men, and some came and others went.
>
> Kitty shivered. The inn was badly built, and the carpet under her feet heaven in the wind. "It must be much too cold up there alone", said Kitty, whose idea of love, though correct, remained withered: for her conception even of normal marriage, was hazy, though correct in essential. Maurice and Alec were at that moment neither lonely nor cold. Their favourite time for talking had been reached. Couched in a shed near their work – to sleep rough had proved safer – they shared in whispered review the events of the day before falling asleep. Kitty was included among them, and after some grumbles they decided to leave their present job and find work in a new district, in case she told the Police or returned. In the glow of manhood "There we shall be safe" they thought [corrected by hand up to the end][42]. They were never to be that. But they were together for the moment; they had stayed disintegration (?) & combined daily work with love; and who can hope for more?" (Forster, 1913-14? [typed])[43]

The first part of the second Epilogue does not present much change when compared with the first one, nor does the very last paragraph. He left at "'which saw?' And nothing else mattered, and he had left her". In the second Epilogue he then picks up the "saw" episode but this time places the reader full in the scene where she is able to talk to the woodman - Alec Scudder, having skipped the paragraph starting by "well, and she didn't mind" and substituted it by the following:

> "(…) can I get out this way? She called to the woodman. He nodded, and replied in an independent voice" If you see my mate, Miss, will you ask him to bring up a saw he has, please?". "Yes, if I see him", said Kitty who felt that a liberty had been taken with her. But speech had interrupted her thoughts, and when the axe recommenced, it was as a human sound. Half a mile on, she saw the second man. He was pilling logs at the side of a clearing. She called to him, and as he approached, she recognized her brother. He seemed a common labourer - not as trimly as he had accosted her. His trousers were frayed, his shirt open at the throat: he began to button it with hard brown fingers (corrected by hand). But when she cried 'Maurice' beneath the exterior a new man throbbed – tougher, more centralized, in as good form as ever, but formed in a fresh mould, where muscles were sunburn proceed from an inward health. "What, you're never still in England … disgraceful … abominable…" She spoke not what she felt but what her training ordained, and as if he understood this he did not reply, nor look at her in the face. He seemed to be waiting – like the woods – till her sterile reproofs were over. "We none of us miss you", she continued. "We never even mention you. Arthur tells us not even to ask what you did. I shall not tell mother I've seen you for she's had enough to bear. A man further up gave me a message to you about a saw, or I wouldn't have spoken otherwise." (Forster, 1913-14? [typed])

[42] The corrections were made by P.N. Furbank.
[43] See Archive Documents reference.

while in the first epilogue he chose to write "'Which saw?*' Nothing else mattered and he left her"*, in the second one he elaborates on the issue:

> "Which saw?" *These were the only words he uttered*[44]: his voice was rough, but still low and very charming. "I don't know and don't care", she said, flying into a rage. Maurice picked up two saws, listened to the noise the axe made, and moved away carrying the smaller. It was her last view of him (Forster, 1913-14? [typed]).

And Forster's text carries on:

> "Kitty shivered. The inn was badly built, and the carpet under her feet heaven in the wind. It must be much too cold up there alone", said Kitty, whose idea of love, though correct, remained withered: for, her conception even of normal marriage was hazy, though correct in essential. Maurice and Alec were at that moment neither cold nor lonely (just a slight change here in the order of the words –'neither lonely nor cold' in the first text) their favourite time for talking had been reached. Couched in a shed near their work – to sleep rough had proved safer – they shared in whispered review the events of the day before falling asleep. Kitty was included among them, and after some grumbles they decided to leave their present job and find work in a new district, in case she told the police or returned. In the glow of manhood "There we shall be safe" they thought (up to the end, hand corrected). They were never to be that. But they were together for the moment; they had stayed disintegration & combined daily work with love; and who can hope for more?" (Forster, 1913-14? [typed])

The ending remained the same in both texts – both young men seem to be happy in the countryside, even though a change of district was at stake. And this is not far from Jane Austen's taste. The company of his lover, the rural setting – which provided, as far as they were concerned, a protected environment for their underground love - and the rural daily routines seemed to satisfy the young Maurice: "And who can hope for more?"

Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*, for example, is the work of someone who wants by all means to defend what is left of England's rural tradition, of a clean and neat country side, with people holding on to traditional manners and customs45. It is her most elaborate endeavour towards the accomplishment of such purpose. She was aware of the changes that would, sooner or later, certainly bring that to an end. And in this respect Forster was not different. *Mansfield Park* worked, in the case of Austen, as her own testimony of a dying world – a return and definite commitment to nature, and, why not, tradition; and again, Forster was no different, even though some societal rules were being broken: the two young men remain together against all odds, the final set would be that of the countryside, the "greenwood" as he liked to call it… and "who could hope for more?!". If Modernism is indeed what the Portuguese academic Santos Pereira says: "… epílogo do romantismo, fuga suprema de qualquer indício de convenção e procura sistemática do inédito" and further, Modernism

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[44] Both italics are mine.

[45] Here is just one example where "modernity" and tradition collide: When the improvement of the grounds at Thornton Lacey were being discussed between the Crawfords and the Bertrams, with Fanny present, in order to have Edmund settled there, the argument gets somehow uncomfortable between the two parts involved since the Crawfords' idea of "modernity" did not quite meet that of the other part's. Here is what was at stake: "The farmyard must be cleared away entirely, and planted up to shut out the blacksmith's shop. The house must be turned to front the east instead of the north…..Then the stream – something must be done with the stream, but I could not determine what. I had two or three ideas." To which Edmund (Austen's hero) replies: "And I have two or three ideas also, and one of them is, that very little of your plan for Thornton Lacey will ever be put in practice. I must be satisfied with rather less ornament and beauty" (Austen, 1994, p.244-245).

is, in terms of literature, the "quebra com a tradição" (Pereira, 2008, p.259), it is hardly applied to Forster, the breach with tradition was something he had sometimes difficulty in accomplishing… if he ever wanted...

3.3 Where Should Forster Be Placed?

Where then should E.M. Forster be placed? Is there a need to place him somewhere as far as a literary trend is concerned? When it comes to deal with the English modernists in particular, there are insurmountable figures that stand above them all – Joseph Conrad, T.S. Eliot, Henry James, D.H. Lawrence or Virginia Woolf, to mention just a few. E. M. Forster appears almost as marginally modernist and throughout the object of open polemics, much for the reasons explained above. It seems that Christopher Isherwood understood him fully as well as the reasons and justifications that presided over the older writer's position in the British both literary and intellectual scene. Forster led his life between London and Cambridge. In the intellectual *milieu* of London he felt comfortable but never fully committed to any trend or particular group. In the Bloomsbury Group he felt comfortable, but let himself dwell on its fringes. This position he shared with the writers of the younger generation. Although close to the Bloomsbury lot, helped by them, absorbing that intellectual atmosphere of sound criticism of the British current affairs, the endless debates on art and literature, even the gossip (so dear to Virginia Woolf), he was never entirely committed. It seems that from the start one way or other all of the younger writers and Morgan Forster have something in common – they are all critics of the society they were born into and they are able to look at British society from a distance which allows them what we could most certainly call "a comfortable position", since all of them, and for different reasons, considered themselves as "outsiders".

A quick survey of the lives of some of the writers mentioned in the first place may, in some way, help to illustrate what we are trying to assert. Joseph Conrad was born in Poland occupied by Russia, from anti-occupation parents. After having undergone uncountable experiences he became an English citizen in 1884. T.S. Eliot and Henry James were both born American and chose England as their new home. T.S. Eliot, at the age of 25, in 1914, the year the First World War started, having acquired British citizenship in 1927 at the age of 39, developed his activity as a poet, playwright, editor and literary critic in England, and was, in the English literary scene, one of the most prominent and influential figures, respected by both old and younger writers. Henry James, after having alternated his life between America and England the first decades of his life, was eventually to choose England as his home. Apparently, due to his critical position regarding the Americans and their late entry in the First World War, he became a British subject in the second year of the conflict. He was to die just one year later, in 1916, aged seventy three.

D.H. Lawrence and Virginia Woolf were British born, but they, themselves, had also distances to keep vis-à-vis the English society – Virginia was a woman, and she knew well the

limitations of being a woman then, and particularly a woman writer. *A Room of one's Own* is the testimony of that restlessness and uneasiness. The book was to lay bare her understanding of the fate of women in a male oriented society like the British society at the time she was writing, also as it had so far always been, as she was throughout her life always preoccupied with the fate of women, regardless of the fact that she was dealing with the question of feminism in Daniel DeFoe's *Moll Flanders*[46] or the fact she was dealing with the fate of the eighteen century woman playwright Aphra Behn. The Behn's issue was majestically presented in a chapter of *A Room of One's Own* – "All women together should let flowers fall upon the tomb of Aphra Behn, for it was she who earned them the right to speak their minds" (Woolf, 1989, p.135).

What is there to say about the issue of marginality as far as D.H. Lawrence is concerned? If we are to consider all the writers mentioned, all of them have in common the fact of belonging to the upper class, or at least to upper middle-class families (i.e. Conrad was born a nobleman), their acceptance was thus made easy; the British society was prepared to accept them despite their eccentricities. More difficult was then – and for that matter today – to climb up the social ladder to find a place in the intellectual *milieu* of London populated by the authors mentioned, plus a few other figures who were to dictate the manners of the day – we are talking here of such figures as Lady Ottoline Morell, Lytton Strachey, Bertrand Russell, just to mention a few, let alone the Bells, Duncan Grant or Roger Fry. Lawrence belonged to humble origins; his fate was, from the start, to remain where his parents had been. He wrote with the experience he, himself, underwent which ultimately is beyond whatever social environment, whatever setting one can think of. When writing about the fate of the underprivileged it was not an experience unknown to him, therefore the closeness of his discourse with that of the characters he designed, to say the least, the whole process of creation was the essence of his own thought and feeling. Raymond Williams expressed it this way:"(…) this essential community, what is experienced again and again is not only closeness and sympathy, but conflict, loss, frustration and despair" (Williams, 1987, p.173-174). Isabel Fernandes apropos this very issue is clear when speaking of Lawrence's style and it is worth noting what the Portuguese academic says: "Para Lawrence, portanto, o estilo é visto como uma metáfora da relação do escritor com a vida. A sua única disciplina de escrita implica assim o respeito pela sua relação viva, o que acarreta a transposição, tão fiel e espontânea quanto possível, das 'experiências mais profundas do ser' para a obra literária" (Fernandes, 1984, p.59). It thus involved evolution and acceptance of the self, outside his own *milieu*, a special otherness, a particular kind of heteronymy, creating a double or triple Lawrence, also in terms of class positioning. It involved, alas, the eternal search, the eternal

[46] "The advocates of women's rights would hardly care, perhaps, to claim Moll Flanders and Roxana among their patron saints; and yet it is clear that Defoe not only intended them to speak some very modern doctrines upon the subject, but placed them in circumstances where their peculiar hardships are displayed in such a way as to elicit our sympathy. Courage, said Moll Flanders, was what women needed, and the power to 'stand their ground'": this could be read in an essay she wrote entitled *The Novels of Defoe* (Woolf, 1989), dated 1919.

acknowledgement of maladaptation, or, as Raymond Williams would put it, of separation, "a crisis of separation" (Williams, 1987, p.176). The London literary or intellectual circles were never to make him at ease, and Lawrence would never want to make himself at ease! He was thus an outsider in this way too, and, somehow, out of his own choice. He feels more than anyone that that sense of "community" (the word is Williams's) is falling apart, industrialism had settled destroying on its way the sense and feeling of affectionate closeness, sharing, solidarity that the most underprivileged classes so well knew and experienced. Industrial intrusion was upsetting nature. A whole new system is creating its roots, becoming sound and solid and what comes out of it all is irreparably extreme and drastic[47]. This feeling he certainly shared with Morgan Forster.

In the case of Lawrence it is not enough to share with his contemporaries the language (even that is questionable, he handles the workers' language like no one else does since it is also his own) or the *milieu*, and this certainly not with Forster. A parenthesis should be made here to acknowledge the respect Forster nurtured for D. H. Lawrence, which was made public by Forster himself in a talk at the BBC microphones on April 16th, 1930, where he states "I met him [Lawrence] three or four times … he leaves an extraordinary impression – so radiant and sensitive… so alive in his spirit" (Forster, 1930, p.56). Randall Stevenson, in his essay on *Forster and Modernism*, already referred to in the present chapter, also directs our attention to Lawrence's work, and contends of "the growing pace of stylistic and formal innovation, characteristic of modernism, shaping fiction by Forster's contemporaries during and just after the First World War. Developments in D. H. Lawrence work at the time both illustrate and relate significantly to some of Forster's fiction: Forster admired Lawrence, and the two writers are often comparable, sometimes surprisingly close" (Stevenson, 2007, p.212).

Lawrence speaks of the mining region, in the North of England where he originates from, its people and its dynamics. Rural Sawston is E. M. Forster's setting, and if the process of creation with Lawrence evolves that way because of his origins, Forster's evolves otherwise precisely because of the same reason – both were well aware of their beginnings, and like Lawrence, Forster, to a great extent, is faithful to his origins.

One can best trace in the first novels of E. M. Forster that almost cosy feeling of remaining in England, and for that matter within the protection and comfort of civilised Europe, of remaining within the boundaries of his own class, no matter how critically he dealt with it. Many of his texts, comments and reflections, including *A Passage to India,* were produced after long stays away from home, i.e. Italy, and at times away from good, old and

[47] This feeling of destruction and inevitability takes us back to Richard Llewellin's 1939 novel *How Green was my Valley* which was, two years later, to be made into a memorable movie by the American film director John Ford, and whose setting is that of a mining region in South Wales, in Victorian times. Hugh Morgan, at one time narrator and protagonist, describes the decline of the place he grew up in with a feeling of nostalgia. The whole setting can easily lead us through Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*, or *Women in Love*; and again Raymond Williams, when referring to a particular passage in Lawrence's *Odour of Chrysanthemums*, speaks of "the feeling: the underlying feeling that is more than just the situation: the dead miner, the dead son and husband being carried home"(Williams, 1987, p.173).

soothing Europe – India and Egypt. Like Forster himself, his characters travel, they change settings. They move and get acquainted with new realities, new ways, and new manners. They travel to worlds of Forster's liking. Getting out is an experience which inevitably gives rise to change, provides evolvement, improvement, development of the self. It can so be witnessed in his first novel *Where Angels Fear to Tread* (written in 1905), which already provides most of the ingredients which were to feature most of his other novels. The action shares its settings between his native Sawston and Italy which gives room to a change in the minds of those who have contact with it, be it a change for the better or for the worse – but nonetheless a change, never a feeling of indifference is to be acknowledged. It is so in *Where Angels Fear to Tread* where, under an Italian sky and also rural England, a radical change takes place in the life of Lydia, but not only: also her brother-in-law, Philippe Herriton, Harriet, her sister in-law or Miss Abbot. It is also so in *A Room with a View* (written in 1908), where, once again, rural England and enchanting Italy and its culture supply the push for change.

The Schlegel sisters of *Howards End* are different, they enjoy life differently, their concerns are different, their origins are other than rural England where they were raised and dwell, they also travel, they are able to see beyond, to see otherwise, and to have a degree of tolerance not quite so common amongst those they come to be in contact with. It makes them distinct from the Wilcoxes that, apart from the first Mrs Wilcox who is imbued of similar sensitivity and tolerance, are completely taken by the evils of a emerging new society, a new mode of life which is germinating and rapidly taking shape – the world of business and money making. Margaret Schlegel believes that through "personal relations and personal intercourse" (much like her creator), it is possible to establish the desired "connection" between people. These are the values she cultivates, and here, it must be admitted, they totally approach Forster's.

Even Clive Durham, in *Maurice*, needs to get away, only to emerge later, changed from his trip abroad. This time it is Greece that makes wonders. Holder of a fairly sound knowledge of the Greek culture, he comes back from his solo adventure a different man. One may, nonetheless, argue whether this almost radical change has solely to do with the fact that he got in close contact with another culture or whether the fact of being in complete solitude might not also have been a decisive factor in his change of sexual preferences and, consequently, change in his life trajectory. It seems also possible to speculate around the idea of class duties, of social standing, of maintenance, consciously or not, of the *status quo* that necessarily entailed a different sexual orientation, though one is never fully convinced that his marriage was a happy one. It is thus so that Clive Durham seriously starts considering his differences vis-à-vis the other man and the long path which will have to be paved ahead of him, which, as a consequence, applies to Maurice Hall as well. Clive Durham chooses politics, a conventional family; he sticks to tradition and somehow recovers the old societal values, while Maurice is left to toil, alone, with the full awareness of his own difference. Class prejudices seem to play a role also in Durham's options.

It is clear that in Forster's first novelistic work, most of it of a comedic character, he was not focused on problems of a wider character; he chose not to tackle politics or economic issues directly. One has to look for "faultlines", as Sinfeld (1992) would put it, and although those works are far from being political works, politics is there. He did not prevent himself from approaching crucial issues such as class differences. The issue of class is always present in all of them, as if somehow he wished to stress the classist character of human relations and the paramount importance it plays. The theme seems to have worried him throughout life, regardless of his political positions.

The class issue was invariably present in most, if not all, of Forster's works. Lydia, for example, in *Where Angels Fear to Tread,* does not fit into the cannons of the upper class in which she happened to have been married, therefore she was never to be trusted by her first husband's family and they always considered her unfit to raise her own daughter. That task, therefore, was left to her husband's family for the sake of keeping what they acknowledged as being high education patterns. The Italian man she chose to remarry added one more element to her already feeble position within the family framework. In *The Longest Journey*, Forster gave Rickie Elliot an illegitimate half-brother, Stephen Wonham, who was raised in the family but never one of them. When Stephen eventually learns of his liaison with Rickie, he tries an approach but unsuccessfully. Agnes prejudices together with Rickie's unassertive character would not have permitted it. In a *Room with a View*, Lucy Honeychurch falls in love with someone of the "wrong" class in detriment of the upper-class conventional, well-connected and smart Cecil Vyse – though not smart enough to sense in due time that his ways did not meet Lucy's longings. *Howards End* is probably – and we are not here dealing with *A Passage to India* – the work in which classist differences are most acutely expressed. Let us take Leonard Bast alone, and how the lack of money, social status, connections make him the frustrated character he really is and, ultimately, decide his end. Poverty is appalling! And his interest in art and literature in a poor environment does not help to improve his status. It is most ironic that he dies swarmed with books without nonetheless having fulfilled his wishes.

When it comes to E.M. Forster, the rural setting was but just the beginning. Sawston was to be the core of his primary world of which he soon understood the need to leave. Cambridge had a decisive influence on him and nurtured what was to be his liberal humanist thought.

Without completely renouncing the tradition, but rather adding to it something new, he was able to tackle both with mastery, but it is also true that at the beginning of his life as a novelist he might have resisted the compelling influence of industrialisation, of modernity. Nonetheless, contemporaneity was a manifest feature in Forster, which might have raised at the time a certain disturbance for some, to be found, especially, in the pre-war generation. Henry James, for example, was never to consider Forster a complete writer, but Forster was aware of what the limitations of his time were and had to find his way through in order to deal with them. The liberal values that he so much nurtured were in bad shape, and he knew

it only too well. This patent feature in his work makes him, as Medalie (2002, p.198) would say, "seem younger and older than his contemporaries". It may have been this understanding of the world, of "his" world, that won him the respect of the generations that immediately followed his. It was the *sagesse* displayed in his judgements that Christopher Isherwood acknowledges in him and makes him praise the master and feel highly complimented when approved by him. Having been praised by Forster on the occasion of the publication of *The Memorial* (first published in 1932) was, he himself admits, worth more than winning the Nobel Prize. And Isherwood appreciated the warmth the older writer offered him:

> "Connolly had praised *The Memorial*, *Mr Norris* and *The Novaks*, and he was soon to refer to Christopher in print as "a hope of English fiction". Thus fanned, Christopher's ambition burned hotly and he determined that Cyril's hopes should not be disappointed. Nevertheless, Forster's approval was still worth far more to Christopher than Connolly's. Connolly made Christopher feel competitive, Forster didn't – because the one offered fame; the other, love. Connolly …. could forsake Christopher. Forster never would, however much Christopher's work might deteriorate." (Isherwood, 2001, p.271)

Such were Isherwood's feelings concerning Forster. And he was never to be disappointed.

Forster was guided, whether in his fictional works or in his numerous essays always by moral principles, as we have already contended. And this was also the essence of his thought and action – his moral principles, his love for truth, which, it must be acknowledged, was common also to the writers of the younger generation. Isherwood, Auden, Spender, Day-Lewis or Upward seemed to be obsessed by pursuing that path; the same can also be said of Lehmann or MacNeice. And, without fearing to go wrong in our assertion, these were, together with meliorism, Forster's belief that the society can only raise to a more desirable condition by means of human effort - certainly the most important marks he was to pass on to the younger generation of writers and concerned intellectuals. The agent matters, the agent plays a role in society, so was his conviction.

Forster believed in the individual, that the individual alone could do relevant things to the common welfare. He had an almost voluntarist idea of the role of the individual in society while some of his younger friends did not, they rather preferred the collective action in order to change the state of affairs, as, for example, Stephen Spender, Cecil Day-Lewis or Edward Upward, who thought it better to join an organisation, the Communist Party, in which to develop their action, even if they were to leave it afterwards for reasons of intellectual honesty, rather than standing and fighting alone. But Forster believed in the individual as an actor, who, by himself, would constitute a lever towards change, and so he carried on till the end of his life. He could look at himself as "another", without creating a "doppelgänger" or leaving the "room" that was his own. His coherence was one of his most striking features. The sympathy and understanding he always displayed towards his friends and their options made him be respected and loved. The gentle tone of his letters to Isherwood, for example, while the latter was in the United States during the hard times of World War Two, unlike some of his friends, show precisely that respect, and, fully aware that

Europe had lost momentum, he even was happy that his friend was spared such sufferings as those who remained in London went through. He was to manifest his feelings and a certain relief this way in a letter dated 21th April, 1940:

> "I am thankful you are out of Europe at the present time, and wish nearly everyone else I loved was too. If you could save us, even at the cost of your own life, I might beckon you back, but such a notion is utter balls. You could do nothing. Where you are you can do something: manipulate the civilization of the U.S.A… whereas Europe, having missed its beat at the moment of the Spanish War provides nothing." (Zeikowitz, 2008, p.93)

But it is when Morgan Forster is praised and accepted by the younger generation that, notwithstanding his position already established in the intellectual and artistic scene, he feels that at the same time he is one of them, young at heart, sharing the same concerns, either political or others, ultimately one of "their kind", to which he remained faithful to the end of his long life.

CHAPTER 4

The Thirties' Generation

"He could not be at the centre of reality – he thought, or, perhaps, rationalised, recapitulation his working nights are – he could not even imagine it with any force, for longer than a few disturbing moments […] to exist improvising happiness from day to day, and postponing doom, was to ignore events that happened just over the ring of the horizon and behave as if they were inconceivable (which indeed they were)".

Stephen Spender,
Engaged in Writing

4 Engaged in Writing: the involvement of intellectuals and writers in politics

As we have been contending throughout the work, we strongly believe that literature and history go hand in hand and there is no possible way to separate them. At a certain point the public enters so irrevocably the private lives of individuals that they cease to be private, in a way that the political, social and economic conditions of an epoch are determinant and influential to mould the thought of the individuals undergoing such predicament. Those individuals who strive to overcome difficulties in everyday life are the primary and weakest link within the framework of the social and political arrangements. They are but the direct recipients of the politics of the establishment. But the intellectuals, writers and artists who claim to be, and in our view are the avant-garde of society are expected to bring light and ultimately change. They are as much "entrapped" as anyone else, only one expects them to be the heralds of change; we rely on their endeavour and sharp observation, so that an artistic, or for that matter, a literary event can at the same time turn into a political event. This assumes a more relevant role when the world's state of affairs undergoes severe crisis. Hence, the involvement of intellectuals and writers in politics is not a new phenomenon.

Maybe we can trace that involvement, in modern terms, back to the nineteenth century with the Dreyfus Affair which, at the time, divided the French society literally in two definite fields – the Dreyfusist (les Dreyfusards) and the anti-Dreyfusist (les anti-Dreyfusards). The question was not so much that of Captain Dreyfus himself, but that of what his case represented to the French society – the anti-Semitic character of the French State, the outcome of the "Affair", as it was referred to at the time, and the cleavages that henceforth were to be established. The Italian historian Enzo Traverso expresses the idea this way: "… nationalism against universalism, anti-Semitism against equality, militarism against the Republic. During the 1920's and 1930s, these conflicts were to become more pronounced: besides the intellectuals who mobilized to defend democracy, there were others who worked to destroy it" (Traverso, 2004, p.96).

The passionate debate that took place in the intellectual *milieu* in France is far too well known, with Emile Zola taking the floor supporting captain Dreyfus with his *J'accuse* (1898), or Georges Duhamel who used the "Affair" in his *Chroniques des Pasquier* (written 1933-1943) to signify divergences and confrontations within the family household. The "Affair" also made its way through Marcel Proust's *À la Recherche du Temps Perdu* (written 1913-1927) where it was a frequently revisited subject-matter, and also a theme to raise divergences, disagreements and controversies. Marcel Proust, who most of his life had kept politics in abeyance, raised his voice in the infernal babel of the "Dreyfus Affair", when he publicly came in defence of Captain Dreyfus, against the French state. In a letter addressed to his friend Madame Geneviève Strauss (the widow of the composer Georges Bizet, and his model for Duchesse de Guermantes in *À la Recherche*, who made her salon available for pro-

Dreyfusist activities), Marcel Proust tries to engage her in the cause of Captain Dreyfus, by asking her directly to collect signatures of well-known figures to send Picquart in order to impress the judges of the case, and that his request was made on the behalf of Anatole France. Such letter is rather illustrative of to what extent he was involved in the "Affair", and it is part of a set of Proust's letters published by Philip Kolb[48] (see annexe 6). It thus goes without saying that Anatole France's pro-Dreyfusist leanings were clear. The French society, as it were, was split on the account of Dreyfusism. Roger Martin du Gard was to recuperate the "Affair" in his *Jean Barois*[49] precisely at a time when the society and the world was again undergoing a severe social, economic and political crisis, let alone a crisis of values – the Thirties'.

In his *The Thirties and After*, Stephen Spender refers to the tradition of the French intellectuals' involvement in political matters when dealing with the revolutionary English writers of the thirties. For French biographers of an André Malraux or a Louis Aragon the task was relatively simplified when compared to English biographers, and this apropos Stansky and Abrahams whose endeavour in writing Cornford's and Bell's biographies was great, he sustains, once there would be no need for explanations concerning their political involvement since, as seen above, it was in line with a certain concept of what the role a writer or any other artist should be (Spender, 1978, p.186). One needs only to be reminded of, for example, the Malraux Squad in the Spanish Civil War, his participation in both International Writers' Congresses in Defence of Culture, first in Paris, in 1935, and then in Valencia, in 1937, which accounts for Malraux's actual militancy, together with his political writings such as his novel *La Condition Humaine* portraying political events in the 1927 Shanghai; or Louis Aragon whose militancy in the French Communist Party was to last a life time. It is Aragon's poem *L'Affiche Rouge*, written in 1955, which so poignantly echoes in our ears, through the voice of the French and also left-wing militant singer Léo Ferré, that the unfortunate members of Missak Manouchian's resistance group[50] in France during World War Two were to be immortalized:

> Ils étaient vingt-trois quand les fusils fleurirent
> Vingt et trois qui donnaient leur cœur avant le temps
> Vingt et trois étrangers et nos frères pourtant

[48] Philip Kolb was an American scholar, who published, in 1965, a set of Marcel Proust's letters chosen from the thousands he wrote, under the title *Choix de Lettres./Présentées et datées par Philip Kolb - Proust-Marcel, 1871-1922*.

[49] Martin du Gard's work, which takes the title of the leading figure, is a recuperation of the 'Affair' stressing its weight and impact on the French society then, but now seen from a distance, already in 1937, at a critical moment of history, the eve of the Second World War.

[50] Missak Manouchian (1906-1944) was an Armenian intellectual and poet who sought exile in France. He was the leader of a resistance group against the Nazi occupation of France – the MOI – Main d'Oeuvre Immigrée. Out of ethical principles, at the beginning of his political moves, he would hold the position that he was prepared to die but not prepared to kill. He was to abandon this position and set himself and his comrades the task to fight the occupier on the terrain. He was assassinated by the Nazis together with twenty two other militants of various origins – Spanish, Hungarian, Polish and others. Their story was made into a film by the French director Robert Guédigien, released in 2009 under the title *l'Armé du Crime*.

> Vingt et trois amoureux de vivre à en mourir
> Vingt et trois qui criaient la France en s'abattant
>
> (Aragon, 2004, see annexe 7)

André Gide's position vis-à-vis the French colonialism in Congo and Chad after his visit to these two territories under French rule, already in 1925, or his criticism of the Soviet regime under Stalin, which dictated his exclusion from the second International Writers' Congress in Valencia, in 1937, is of the utmost relevance. As far as the first Congress is concerned, it was mostly politics. The first Congress is to be remembered as "a time when public intellectuals were worthy of the title" (Sounders, 2004, p.25).

Jean-Paul Sartre, several generations after the Dreyfus "Affair", was to argue that "the intellectual had no right to privilege of distance or detachment in moments of political extremity" (Sartre cited in Spender, 1978, p.186). It is worth noting that, in 1961, Jean-Paul Sartre, and still maintaining his position of intervention in public affairs, authored the preface of Frantz Fanon's anti-colonial masterpiece *The Wretched of the Earth* (*Les Damnés de la Terre)* where he clear and overtly did take an anti-imperialist/colonialist stand in general, and against Europe and the French colonialism in Algeria in particular, in opposition to the official trend of the French government. Here is a good sample of what he says: "The European *élite* undertook to manufacture a native *élite*. They picked up promising adolescents; they branded them, as with a red-hot iron, with the principles of western culture; they stuffed their mouths full with high-sounding phrases, grand glutinous words that stuck to the teeth. After a short stay in the mother country they were sent home, whitewashed" (Sartre, 1963, p.7). And he spares no efforts to make it clear that:

> "Today, the native populations reveal their true nature, and at the same time our exclusive 'club' reveals its weakness – that it's neither more nor less than a minority. Worse than that: since the others become men in name against us, it seems that we are the enemies of mankind; the *élite* shows itself in its true colours – it is nothing more than a gang. Our precious set of values begins to moult; on closer scrutiny you won't see one that isn't stained with blood, if you are looking for an example, remember these fine words: 'How generous France is!' Us, generous? What about Sétif, then? And those eight years of ferocious war which cost the lives of over a million Algerians? And the tortures?" (Sartre, 1963, p.22)

Roger Martin du Gard himself, whose reluctance to take up politics in writing is known, thought it pertinent to intervene. The sense of catastrophe was so widespread and so invasive that in France, England, and elsewhere the literary intelligentsia felt it was the time to act. Already in the 1920's this feeling was persistently lingering in the minds of great men of letters. May be it is worthwhile mentioning here, as rather illustrative, a meeting between Nikos Kazantzaki and Panaït Istrati – the Gorki of the Balkans, as he is known - in Moscow, as early as 1927. This meeting is described by Kazantzaki himself in a small text published in his *Lettre au Greco – Souvenirs de ma Vie,* under the title *La Grande Fête Rouge,* where he describes, with reasonable detail, his first meeting with the Romanian writer; after wondering about the current politics, Istrati was to say to him:

> "Le discours que tu as prononcé avant-hier devant le Congrès ; il m'a plu. Tu as bien enfoncé le clou. Imbéciles d'Européens ! Ils s'imaginent qu'avec l'ironie de leur porte-

> plumes ils vont éviter la guerre; ou que, si la guerre éclate, les ouvriers vont se soulever et jeter les armes. Balivernes ! Les ouvriers, je les connais! Ils vont se trainer une fois de plus à la boucherie et ils tueront ! Tu as bien enfoncé le clou, je te dis : Que nous voulions ou non, une nouvelle guerre mondiale va éclater, soyons au moins prêts." (Kazantzaki, 1961, pp.417-418)

which sounds quite promising as far as action is concerned, and it was indeed, from what we know of Panaït Istrati.

Activism then became almost a question of honour. It seemed, as it were, that capitalism was reaching the point of exhaustion and what had been solidly established until then in the Western democracies was being drastically shaken. It became painfully and shamefully visible. In England, the intellectuals found it impossible to coexist with hunger marches, with unemployment, with employed proletariat that notwithstanding the fact that they were employed, it did not keep them from starving. They were aware that this was the same system that favoured a cultivated class which seemed to live apart and above social disturbances, economic problems or politics, in favour of the "primacy of art" as argued in the Bloomsbury entourage. This comfort was to be irrevocably upset.

The Writers' International Congress in 1935, born out of that sense of disastrous fate looming over the society called forth the action of the European intellectuals, writers and artists in general precisely to discuss not so much the aesthetic values in an environment of serious national and international crisis, but rather that of the fight against fascism. It may not have been an easy step for some writers to reach the point where their art had to mingle with politics, but the urgency of the moment was such that they had ultimately to give in. It was so with Martin du Gard, as said, and it was so with E.M. Forster, whose participation in the Congress was to be the object of some unfortunate criticism.

E.M. Forster responded positively to the call of his French intellectual peers. With his characteristic honesty, he was to declare in his speech before his fellow writers, and some thousand people that attended the Palais de la Mutualité, most candidly, that "I am not a communist, but perhaps I would have been were I younger and braver" (Forster, 1955, p. 61). There he spoke in favour of parliamentary democracy, against the fascism and war, against the lack of liberty felt by the intellectuals and creators in his country and the need to establish some sort of contact with his peers across the Channel. He was there to add his protest to the anti-fascist struggle. He was there in his own right. His speech was not understood, but, with hindsight, now we can just think of him as almost a visionary as far as matters of democracy are concerned. The sweeping "leftist rhetoric" that characterized the Congress was to bore not only E. M. Forster but also his compatriot Aldous Huxley, who also attended the gathering.

At this point, it seems pertinent to look into Forster's speech in more detail which was to be published in his *Abinger Hervest* the following year under the title *Liberty in England* and previously mentioned, to try and justify his "visionary" thought.

In 1935, when the truth about the Soviet regime had not quite been made clear, addressing an assembly mostly populated by communists might have been a hard task for the

liberal humanist Forster. He was aware of that, but his honesty and sense of duty dictated his decision to be present and frankly state his views. He elaborated further on the issue of communism by saying "It does many things which I think evil, but I know that it intends good" (Forster, 1955, p.61). It is sensible to admit that although the lack of information regarding the Soviet regime was a reality, he might have had some rumours by then. Maybe everybody else there might have also known but the difference between Forster, a humanist, and most of his colleagues was that he did consider the matter seriously and chose not to dismiss it as reactionary propaganda. The fact that he was not compromised with any political trend or organisation might have contributed to a more dispassionate appreciation on his part. Maybe by then everybody was already aware of Sergei Kirov's[51] assassination, in 1934, but while Forster allowed it a critical thought and might have put into question the Soviet experiment, his communist colleagues might have just wanted to believe the "incident" was being used to besmirch the Soviet regime. Did he mean some sort of warning or should one simply accept his explanations considering his humanist thought?

For all this, it seems only too natural that he chose to speak about "liberty of expression" and "cultural tradition", as if he had some sort of previous knowledge or some sort of foreboding, not in what concerns Germany and its methods, the reality there was at that point widely known, but rather in what concerns the Soviet Union, the land of communism, as speculated above. As an Englishman, born under a solidly established democracy and a fully operational Parliament, with all its defects and failures, liberty of expression and cultural tradition were values to be cherished and preserved. In our perspective, this was not only a courageous step but also a challenge – "freedom has been praised in my country for several hundred years" he was to say. He is "a bourgeois who adheres to the British constitution, adheres to it rather than supports it" (Forster, 1955, p.60).

Knowing that his assertion might be the object of criticism, he toils over the issue of freedom in England and tries to make its limits clear while at the same time holding to its merits. Freedom in England is both "race-bound" and "class-bound", meaning freedom for the Englishman while denying it to the subjects of the British Empire: "If you invite the average Englishman to share his liberties with the inhabitants of India or Kenya he will reply 'Never', if he is a Tory, and 'Not until I consider them worthy', if he is a liberal"[52] (Forster, 1955, p.60). And he goes on expressing his thoughts; he feels there is something wrong with these two opinions. As to the issue of class, he admits that "Freedom in England is only

[51] Sergei Kirov (1886-1934) was a Bolshevik leader of Lenin's time and head of the Communist Party organisation in Leningrad. Kirov's assassination is now seen as having being the start of the Moscow Trials' ordeal, and was allegedly ordered by Stalin who seemed not to have accepted the fact that Sergei Kirov was becoming more popular than himself and with a more flexible party line namely vis-à-vis party dissidents. Keeping Kirov in Leningrad seemed thus not to be enough to stop his rising popularity.

[52] We have already, while dealing with *A Passage to India* and some of his BBC broadcasts, mentioned his almost sceptical feeling about the future of India as an independent country as well as the "connection" between the two peoples. "'No, not yet', and the sky said 'No, not there'" (Forster, 1976a). Is this not a similar assertion? It simply was *not quite* the right time! Does this not account for his liberal thoughts?

enjoyed by people who are fairly well-off" (Forster, 1955, p.61). He seems to be very lucid in his thinking and conscious of his position; he fully understands the drama of the working-classes that have very little to live on and for whom the issue of freedom is almost not an issue; they may find it beyond their scope of understanding since their main concern lies on matters of survival, thus turning freedom into an upper-class luxury therefore secondary in their scale of priorities. Still he believes in liberty even when it possesses these limitations. It can always be improved, he sustains. The past is an intrinsic part of him, age and upbringing account for his own ideas, he confesses. In England "forms of Government" and "forms of Justice" are paramount and he considers the "danger from Fascism" in his native England as "negligible".

He then moves from details to the "possibility of a general campaign" (Forster, 1936, p.65), as he calls it, which he believes to be the main reason for these writers' gathering, and openly states his wish for "greater freedom for writers, both as creators and critics" (Forster, 1955, p.65). Sex is an issue to be dealt with freely as well as the right of public comment. He complains of the governmental control of the media thus claiming for more freedom of publication and considers the "Sedition Act" (as it directly interferes with the use of language, thus limiting the free speech because it supposedly carries of and encourages disrespect of the laws in force) as "the most open blow that has been struck lately against freedom of expression in England" (Forster, 1955, p.62). He speaks of the suppression of D. H. Lawrence's *Rainbow* original edition, but, according to him these are just details. He also regrets the terrible isolation felt by the English writers and seeks the approval of his "Continental colleagues". This was his personal judgement and he intended to take full responsibility for what he said, so he reckoned it necessary to clarify to the audience in front of him that

> "Before I conclude my remarks, I must make clear that they are composed independently and do not represent the general opinion of the English delegation. My colleagues probably agree with my account of the situation in our country, but they may disagree with my old-fashioned attitude over it, and may feel that it is waste of time to talk about freedom and tradition when the economic structure of society is unsatisfactory. They may say that if there is another war, writers of the individualistic and liberalizing type, like myself and Mr Aldous Huxley will be swept away…"(Forster, 1955, p.65).

Such a speech was not welcome by his colleagues of the other side of the Channel, who overlooked him. It seemed, as it were, neither the right speech nor the right time to pronounce it. That happened to be a gathering of communist writers in its essence. It is interesting at this stage to recall both André Gide's and André Malraux's assertions at the Congress. Gide had adhered to the working-class cause and was eager to make his position public. He was to state then that

> "It is my claim that one can be profoundly internationalist while remaining profoundly French. Just as I claim to remain profoundly individualist in full communist assent and with the help of communism. For my thesis has already been the following: It is by being the most private that each person best serves the community. Today I would add another thesis, counterpart or corollary of the first: it is in a communist society

> that each individual, the privacy of each individual, can most perfect expand" (Gide in Freund, 1985).

Unfortunately the Soviet authorities would have a different interpretation of such society, as Gide himself came to realise. We shall come back to Gide and to this issue in particular later in the text. André Malraux, on his part, was to plainly declare that "Communism restores to the individual his fertility" (Malraux in Freund, 1985). The issue of individualism put that way by André Gide was certainly not in tune with that of Forster nor was Malraux's assertion. The passing of time and historical events were to prove his ideas were not after all so out of place. André Gide as well as André Malraux, promoters of the Congress, to whom all the attention was turned, might have disapproved of them then, but a couple of years later, they might have found some kind of sense in Forster's words. They both were to abandon communism. Gide was not to be present in the 1937 Writers' Congress in Valencia, and was himself the object of the most severe and overt criticism for having had the courage to make public his negative impressions of the Soviet regime. Because of the numerous attacks on his political views as well as on his private life, Gide chose not to explore a social consciousness anymore. His biographer Jean Jacques Thierry closes the chapter on his political engagement with the following conclusion:

> "Saturé d'insultes, calomnié, vilipendé sur sa vie privée, et même son œuvre menacée de représailles, l'écrivain se cabre. Il ne fera plus d' «incursion dans le social». De son engagement, il gardera un mauvais souvenir : celui que laisse à l'esprit désenchanté la dangereuse expérience d'un «grand trébuchoir». Gide n'est plus communiste, s'il l'a jamais été. Curieusement, le premier vrai succès de Gide en librairie – mais pour des raisons qui n'ont rien de littéraire -, est dû aux souvenirs rapportés de son voyage à l'Est." (Thierry, 1986, p.165)

Forster was though not to leave the stage of the La Mutualité without addressing a kind thought to the coming generations of writers: "The task of civilization will be carried on by people whose training has been different from my own …" (Forster, 1955, p.66), and they did indeed appreciate for he was never to be deprived of their friendship until his death. Christopher Isherwood's letters, for example, account for that essential truth. E.M. Forster was *malgré tout* more of an independent spirit.

4.1 The Thirties' Generation in England: the current political predicament

When considering the "Thirties' Generation" in the English intellectual and artistic scene, the tendency is to think of it as the "Auden Generation": the title Samuel Hynes chose for his book on the period, and where he elaborates on that generation of men that were too young to participate in the First World War – they were the children of World War I soldiers – were old enough to fight the Second, and take position vis-à-vis the conflict which was to involve the whole world and lead its best men to take sides and find alternative ways to express their views using their artistic skills.

The men who became known in the English literary history as the "Thirties'

Generation", or the "Auden Generation", were in fact the product of a world which was at odds with conflicts so serious that in a matter of some three decades registered three of the bloodiest episodes ever – the First World War, the Spanish Civil War immediately followed by the Second World War, which would decisively change the social and political arrangements in the whole world. Britain's inner disruption of the social tissue, whose consequences were heavy unemployment and hunger, the events in the Soviet Union together with the inefficacity of the League of Nations to take action and honour the principles that presided over its foundation, and seemed not to be working, were these writers' main concerns, and which ultimately led them into taking serious action to try and find alternative ways to make their art meaningful and hopefully effective in such a state of affairs. Enzo Traverso's view is clear about this precise issue: "This escalation aroused an increasing anxiety whose echo was felt in art and culture" (2004, p.6).

For a better understanding of our perspective, we consider it useful to go back a little in time and sketch a brief history of the ephemeral duration of the League of Nations, and why its failure to fulfil its role became a decisive element of disruption, not only in England but in the world at large.

The League had precisely been created in the aftermath of World War I to try and prevent the nations from carrying out violent actions against each other – so was the spirit of the world governors after the 1914-1918 world conflict. Disputes should thus be settled by arbitration of an international organization where most countries should be represented. In a memorandum signed by Robert Cecil, a member of the British Parliament, in September 1916, it was stated that "civilization could only survive if it could develop an international system to ensure peace" (Simkin, 2013). In April 1919, in the Paris Peace Conference, the League of Nations came into existence. Deprived of an army, the control was to be made effective by means of boycotts or sanctions. Economic sanctions should thus be imposed upon those nations which were held responsible for provoking war. But if the League proved efficient in preventing some minor conflicts, it proved its inefficacy as far as greater strength and sound decisions were at stake. When, for example, in 1923, France occupied the Ruhr and Italy attacked Corfu – the Greek Island – the League did not intervene. Konni Zilliacus (a member of the League's Secretariat)[53] was to regret this: "I feel depressed and fed up. Who could have imagined things would turn out as badly as this?" (Simkin, 2013). This feeling was not only Zilliacus's, it seemed to have extended to most sectors of the society.

If around 1929-1930 there appeared to be an air of good-will sweeping the League with the participation of the foreign ministers of most European nations, for the annual meeting, crisis broke out again in 1931 when the Chinese province of Manchuria was occupied

[53] Konni Zilliacus was of Finnish origin. After the First World War, where he had been involved, he joined, in London, The Union of Democratic Control (UDC), and also in 1918 he joined the Labour Party. A year later he was to become a member of the League of Nations Secretariat. In the 1945 general election, he won a seat in the House of Commons.

by Japan[54]. Again the League was ineffective when, in 1935, Benito Mussolini, the Italian dictator, sent his troops to invade Abyssinia. For fear of a political association of Fascists and Hitler's Nazis, the League once more turned a blind eye. In September, 1938, the Munich agreement was signed between Italy, Germany, France and Britain. The latter was being run by a highly conservative government since 1931 when the Labour Party dramatically lost the elections, which according to Samuel Hynes "was Labour's worst political defeat" (Hynes, 1977, p.65). Such agreement was to give way to the accomplishment of Hitler's imperialist desire to occupy the Sudetenland (a part of Czechoslovakia) with the consent of the signatories. The Moscow Trials[55] between 1936 and 1938 together with the signature of the German-Soviet Pact joined in the chain of delicate issues.

So was the world state of affairs when the men of the Auden generation were just young undergraduates, in search of artistic as well as political direction, an enthusiastic, committed, and passionately involved generation whose aim was that of breaking away from the older generation and find their own way in which their emerging art was to make sense. The issue at stake here was not that of complete rejection of their elders, whom they respected, but rather that of finding an identity of their own in a world which was undergoing dramatic changes. Stephen Spender was to make this clear in his *The Thirties and After*:

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[54] Bernardo Bertolucci was to recuperate the event as well as the general mood of the epoch in his 1987 film *The Last Emperor*, and Auden and Isherwood would produce *Journey to a War*, a joint travel-book first published in 1939, which was the result of their also joint journey to cover the conflict. When dealing with the Auden-Isherwood collaboration we shall come back to this issue further in the text.

[55] The Moscow Trials, now also known as the Show-Trials or the Frame up-Trials, refer to the two trials that were held in the former Soviet Union between the years 1936-1938 which aimed at eradicating from the Soviet political scene the Old Bolsheviks of Lenin's time, namely Leon Trotsky. The first trial took place in August 1936 and the second in January 1937, sixteen accused were executed as a result of the first trial, and as a result of the second trial thirteen accused were executed, the other four were condemned to serve long term sentences. In March 1938 the last victims of the trials to be shot were Bukharin, Rykov and Krestinsky. They were all accused of counter-revolutionary activities, collaboration with the fascists – Trotsky, for example, was accused of having had secret negotiations with the Nazis, sabotage, among other things. The defendants were forced to confess and to give away others, and after the false confessions they were shot. Among those executed by the Soviet regime were Zinoviev, Kamenev and Smirnov. The French writer Romain Rolland appealed personally to Stalin in favour of Bukharin, but with no success. A "Commission of Inquiry into the Charges made against Leon Trotsky in the Moscow Trials" was formed under the supervision of the American philosopher and Professor John Dewey, and was composed of a committee of liberal democratic people. After the thorough work of the Commission a report was released. The report is now known as *The Dewey Report*, also *Not Guilty*. In it, Leon Trotsky's defence was made public. Here is a passage of his defence before the Commission, dated April, 1937: "Why does Moscow so fear the voice of a single man? Only because I know the truth, the whole truth. Only because I have nothing to hide. Only because I am ready to appear before a public and impartial commission of inquiry with documents, facts, and testimonies in my hands, and to disclose the truth to the very end. I declare: if this commission decides that I am guilty in the slightest degree of the crimes which Stalin imputes to me, I pledge in advance to place myself voluntarily in the hands of the executioners of the G.P.U. That, I hope, is clear. Have you all heard? I make this declaration before the entire world. I ask the press to publish my words in the farthest corners of the planet. But if the commission establishes - do you hear me? - that the Moscow Trials are a conscious and premeditated frame-up, constructed with the bones and nerves of human beings, I will not ask my accusers to place themselves voluntarily before a firing squad. No, the eternal disgrace in the memory of human generations will be sufficient for them! Do the accusers of the Kremlin hear me? I throw my defiance in their faces. And I await their reply!" (From Trotsky's summary speech before the Dewey Commission, April 19370).
The Dewey Report was to conclude that those Trials were Frame-Up Trials, and Trotsky's verdict was of not-guilty. (http://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1937/dewey, retrieved on 14th February 2013).

> "Our generation reacted against the same convictions of Georgian poetry and the novel as did the generation of T. S. Eliot, Virginia Woolf, D. H. Lawrence and E. M. Forster. They were indeed our heroes […] the two generations often agreed in their diagnosis: they came to opposite conclusions with regard to remedies […] the younger generations, in coming to their revolutionary conclusions, owed their view that we were living in a revolutionary situation to the insights of reactionaries." (Spender, 1978, pp.203-204)

It is also known, and made clear by Stansky and Abrahams in their biography of Julian Bell and John Cornford, and borne out by Spender, that the latter young man owes his precocious communist views to T. S. Eliot. The reading of the *Waste Land* made him conscious of "the capitalist society in decay". John Cornford read it "against the grain", thus dismissing it as a religious allegory, and saw in it rather a "perfect picture of the disintegration of a civilization", but parting with Eliot when the older poet fails to provide an answer to "the question of resignation" by retreating "into the familiar triangle – Classicism, Royalism, Anglo-Catholicism" (Stansky and Abrahams, 1966, pp.174-175).

Stephen Spender's constant attempts towards the understanding of the epoch and the multitude of feelings swarming in the society were remarkable. He did serious work on analysing the deeds of his own generation supplying important information, not so much about the facts in themselves, which he also did, but very much on the general mood and inner conflicts that presided over their decisions to act political and socially, or not to act, as the case may be, when and where. Spender himself would put the question in the following terms:

> "The sense of political doom, pending in unemployment, Fascism and the overwhelming threat of war, was by now so universal that even to ignore these things was in itself a political attitude. Just as the pacifist is political in refusing to participate in war, so the writer who refuses to recognize the political nature of our age must to some extent be refusing to deal with an experience in which he himself is involved." (Spender, 1951, p.249)

When writing about the Thirties' Generation, Samuel Hynes speaks of how often "actions that men performed were symbolic, and self-consciously symbolic, acts" (Hynes, 1977, p.71). Whether the acts, writings, poems of these men were just symbolic acts is somehow arguable, but one can only agree with Hynes, who, regarding this issue, also shares Spender's views, when he reflects upon how "difficult it must have been to the ordinary man, to take significant direct action on public issues, but it becomes more difficult, almost unimaginable, when the issue is as vast and threatening abstraction – Poverty, or Fascism, or War" (Hynes, 1977, p.70). The three mentioned afflictions were indeed the issues of the time – two and a half million unemployed in England, a right-wing government which dragged along the worst a society can produce and young intellectuals and artists could think of – censorship and lack of freedom! Fascism had settled in Italy, Nazism just about to settle in Germany, a dictatorship also in the Soviet Union, a different kind of dictatorship in ideological terms, but nonetheless a dictatorship, totalitarian regimes were gaining ground, and war was sensed to break out soon. The three public issues which Hynes refers to and that undermined the private lives of these young intellectuals were on the agenda of the

Thirties' Generation. But Hynes continues his line of thought by stating that "in these cases the only possible action may seem to be a private act that has only symbolic public meaning: defiance, self-immolation, the wild last gesture" (Hynes, 1977, p.70).

It would be interesting here, and apropos the symbolic act, to borrow precisely Hynes's story about an anti-fascist Italian poet – Lauro de Bosis, who, in October 1931, decided to board a light plane, starting in France, and spread political anti-fascist propaganda over the city of Rome. The fact was that he did not come back from such a trip. What happened to him is unknown: it seems that prior to his departure he had left a peculiar text entitled *The Story of my Death*, already pre-conceiving the hypothesis of a trip with no return as Hynes himself did put it "the document he left anticipated his own death" Hynes, 1977, p. 70, which was further in the month published in London's *The Times*. It was a gesture of atonement, a "sacrificial gesture", as he names it, therefore being a symbolic one. He further acknowledges that "he achieved nothing by it except his death and the creation of a myth of himself" (1977, p.71). It might have been the case with de Bosis, but Hynes goes further and carries on his line of thought by recalling Rupert John Cornford's death some years later, in 1936, while fighting in the Spanish Civil War, trying to establish some kind of analogy.

We shall deal in more detail with Cornford's case, but it is interesting to notice, for the time being, that for both Hynes and the author of Cornford's obituary note in the Cambridge paper, Lauro de Bosis came to their minds. The obituarist was to write then "I could not but think, when I heard of his [Cornford's] death, of Lauro de Bosis, the young Italian who went to Rome in his lonely aeroplane … John Cornford went to Spain in a sober English way, with a quiet resolution; but he was of the same stuff" (Barker in Simkin, 1997). What "stuff" he meant, we know not. We surely admit that Lauro de Bosis's gesture was certainly that of a committed young man, but as far as we know he acted out of his own impulse and solo; as for John Cornford, one must absolutely take into account his very early *prise de conscience*, almost premature, and the difference between one and the other is that Cornford, although "sober in an English way", did not at all act outside the organization he was a member of. He had first been a member of the Young Communists League and in March 1935 he was to become "a fully-fledged" member of the Communist Party of Great Britain (Stansky and Abrahams, 1966, p.233), which in itself explains the fact that Cornford would never perform that symbolic gesture for the sake of it. The party discipline would not have tolerated that in the first place and, from what we know of him, from his early militant days in London to the three years of his degree – 1933-1936 – in Cambridge, he fought a different war. His frantic political activities, from party meetings, to rallies, to hunger marches next to the working-class, to public speeches, to fund raising, and so forth, account for what he believed in, for the faith and conviction that his struggle would contribute to stop Fascism and war, to achieve a classless society, and he did not for a moment set eyes on a different and less modest horizon. His letters from Aragon, Spain, to Margot Heinemann show his purposes, and are clear as for where his hopes lay:

> "In Barcelona one can understand physically what the dictatorship of the proletariat means…. The place is free and conscious all the time of its freedom. Everywhere in the streets are armed workers and militiamen, and sitting in the cafés which used to belong to the bourgeoisie. And further: I shall fight like a communist if not like a soldier." (Cunningham, 1983, p.120)[56]

He was absolutely integrated in a collective action, which he himself helped to raise and was the driving force. The contours of his decision to take action the way he did are known, although he was fully aware of the risks he was taking as he admits to Heinemann:

> "I am writing everything down just as it comes out… First of all, a last will and testament. As you know there is a risk of being killed. Statistically not very great, but it exists all the same." (Cunningham, 1983, p.118)

As a self-confessed Marxist, the last thing he wanted was to die, he had hoped that he would come out of that war alive and that future struggles, namely towards a classless society, in which he believed, lay ahead of him. We shall further come back to this very issue and try to shed some light onto John Cornford's political action and also onto that of his companions, like him men of letters. We shall try to analyse the outcome of his decisions at that crucial moment.

4.2 *Morituri te salutant*: Ralph Fox, Christopher Caudwell, Julian Bell and Rupert John Cornford

Before dealing with the so-called "Auden Generation", which refers to such young men as W. H. Auden himself, Christopher Isherwood, Stephen Spender, John Lehmann, Edward Upward, Cecil Day- Lewis or Louis MacNeice – also known as the Thirties' Group - to mention just the best known, some considerations should be made, although brief as they will necessarily have to be, apropos other young man, born just around the same time, who then roughly belonged to the same generation, their birth dates ranging from 1898 (Wintringham) to 1915 (Cornford, just mentioned above), also university men from Cambridge and Oxford, who form yet another core and seemed animated of the same political determination and ideals – they were, if not all of them, mostly communists, at

[56] Thanks to Valentine Cunningham, the most complete collection of Spanish Civil War verse in the English language was published, in 1980. In the book's introduction, Cunningham explains the reasons that presided over the edition. As a professor of English Language and English literature at Oxford University, he felt that there was a gap to be filled in what concerned that precise war. His students, "especially those who were interested in the important relationship between literature and society in the 1930's and as evinced during the Spanish Civil War period, were unable to make informed judgements because most of the material they needed was uncollected… scattered in numerous magazines in widely located libraries, and so was extremely difficult of ready access" (Cunningham, 1983, p.15). Various publishers were not willing to publish a volume that included Spanish Civil War verse alone, thus urging him to include also verse of the two world wars, which he did not feel comfortable to accept explaining that a wide range of material about those two wars had already been published. It is also worth noting that he had the opportunity to have the collaboration of some poets who contributed written material work to the making of this book, namely Stephen Spender and H.B. Mallalieu. He was also able to count on the 'kind attention' of Margot Heinemann, the last companion of the unfortunate John Cornford.

least left-wingers, and except for Tom Wintringham[57] they all died fighting for the Republic, against Franco, in the Spanish Civil War. They were, in spite of their short lives, all promising figures of the English letters. Their names were Ralph Fox, 30th March, 1900; Christopher Caudwell, 20th October, 1907; Julian Bell, 4th February, 1908; and Rupert John Cornford 27th December, 1915.

Stephen Spender, himself a member of the Auden Generation, reminds us that:

> "It might be argued that the real thirties was that of John Cornford, Christopher Caudwell, Tom Wintringham, Ralph Fox and Julian Bell; all of them examples of men in whose behaviour ideas and actions formed a unity." (Spender, 1978, p.26)

According to Samuel Hynes's definition "A generation is, first of all, people of roughly the same age in roughly the same place" (Hynes, 1976, p.17), and we would dare to add: undergoing the same historical moment and sharing the concerns of their own time. One may thus consider that they may "roughly" belong to the same generation as Auden, born on the 21st February, 1907, but one may also consider that in such troubled times the concept of generation may not signify a "precise" or "definite" period of time, and a matter of five or six years may well make a considerable difference in what might be taking decisions, making options, or choosing a certain degree of radicalism. One can see that, for example, in the divergences between Julian Bell (1908) and John Cornford (1915), which were so graciously put in the Cambridge *Students Vanguard*, in the year 1933. All that taken into account, the fifteen years that separated John Cornford from Ralph Fox (1900) seemed to have been no encumbrance for both of them dying the same death fighting against the Francoists, in the Jaen olive fields, on the 3rd of January, 1937. John Cornford was reported to have died while trying, under heavy bombardments of the German air troops, to retrieve Ralph Fox's body also hit by bombs dropped by the German planes. It seems also that it was impossible for their comrades to rescue their bodies (Fox, 1956, pp.5-6).

Christopher Caudwell was the only one amongst the rest of them that did not come out either of Cambridge or Oxford Universities, in spite of the fact that he was born in an upper middle-class family. He left school at the age of fifteen, and from then on he dedicated the best of his time to study, apparently in isolation. He had joined the Communist Party of Great Britain at an early age, in 1934. When the Civil War in Spain broke out, as a full member of the Communist Party of Great Britain, he volunteered to join the

[57] Tom Wintringham, 15th May, 1898 – 15th August, 1949. William Morris, H.G. Wells and Jack London were the readings that inspired him to become a socialist. He read history in Oxford University. On his 18th birthday he joined the Royal Flying Corps, and he served in World War I in the Western Front. After coming back from war he continued his studies at Oxford University where he was to meet Ralph Fox. He was responsible for the establishment of the *Left Review*, and eventually in 1923 he joined the Communist Party of Great Britain. The International Brigades were his inspiration as much as that of Maurice Thorez's, the French Communist Party leader, born out of the necessity felt by Wintringham on the terrain to integrate a number of foreign elements who reached Spain with the purpose to fight for the Republic. Authorization was granted by Stalin to form the Brigades, and in September 1936 an international recruiting centre was set up in Paris, as well as a training base in Albacete-Spain. Wintringham died in England, in 1949 (Simkin, 2013).
http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/Jwinteringham.htmhttp://www.spartacus.schoolnetco.uk/Jwintringham.htm, retrieved on February 2013).

International Brigades in defence of the Popular Front. Part of the British Battalion, Christopher Caudwell was to lose his life on what became known as "the Suicide Hill"[58], in the valley of Jarama, while backing his comrades to retreat. This was in February, 1937 (Simkin, 2013). Although young as he was when he died, he left a considerable set of theoretical writings which places him amongst the most eminent Marxist writers of his day in Britain, especially as far as aesthetics is concerned, and this in spite of all the "weaknesses" arising from his solitary work and reflection (Sypher, 1976, pp.65-66). His work seems to have been so original and suggestive that it cannot be ignored and became the object of more recent attention by scholars.

In his *Studies in a Dying Culture*, republished in 1977 by Lawrence and Wishart under the title *Christopher Caudwell 1907-1937 - The Concept of Freedom*, it is interesting to notice how he deals with the concept of "liberty", that he entitled precisely *Liberty*. A study in bourgeois illusion, he challenges contemporary intellectuals like Bertrand Russell or even E. M. Forster. While agreeing that "liberty does seem to me the most important of all generalized goods – such as justice, beauty or truth…"[59] he argues that artists, philosophers, scientists, investigators, and so on, never quite precisely defined what the accurate meaning of freedom really is – either the meaning of the word is "invariant in history" or then these intellectuals use it in "the contemporary bourgeois sense". The latter seems to be the obvious justification for what we know of his thought and for the polemics that it generated. By getting hold of Forster's conception of liberty – which has already been dealt with in our work - he contends that "all social relations are restraints on spontaneous liberty" just to conclude, ironically, that then the "animal is the only complete free creature", which he immediately and peremptorily gainsays as an "ancient fallacy". He further argues that the bourgeois intellectual is "unfree" until he acknowledges that "society is the only instrument of freedom". Man is "unfree alone. Therefore he attains freedom by cooperation with his fellows" (Caudwell, 1937, p.181), he was to sustain. For a Marxist thinker this is, obviously, the only conclusion possible, that of placing the collective above the individual action and part of what we can call "emancipatory politics".

The problems intellectuals are faced with in society, and which side they should be on was also the object of his close attention. The liberal humanism that we have already referred to as being a characteristic of E.M. Forster's thought is skilfully tackled by Caudwell when he confronts the intellectual precisely with the issue of who in fact enjoys the "liberty he regarded as contemporary", and "does he wish that there should exist for ever these two states of captivity and freedom, of misery and happiness?". Hence, freedom cannot be fully enjoyed if it is sustained by the "same cause as the workers' unfreedom" (Caudwell, 1937,

[58] It was also here that the young Charles Donnelley, the talented Irish promising poet, also lost his life at the age of twenty two.
[59] Forster, in his speech, before the First Writers' Congress in Defence of Culture, in Paris, in 1935, was also to express what he thought to be the 'limits of freedom', considering that freedom was a 'race-bound' and 'class-bound' concept as referred to above when dealing with Forster's text *Liberty in England*.

p.184). As a convict Marxist he urges the intellectual to help the change of what he calls the "bourgeois social relations".

Science and art are realms to which he dedicated his time, the former being the means towards man's knowledge of his own capabilities, thus exploring the need of the surrounding reality, while the latter, he argues, "is the means by which man learns what he wants to do, and therefore it explores the essence of the human heart" (Caudwell, 1937, p.185).

All art forms were dear to him, literature and poetry being his primary interest, but he also considered music, theatre or dance as respectable forms of expression. He sees art as a device in social production; the way through art man distinguishes himself from animals for it makes man human thus being fundamental for his social life – art works upon man's emotions, and, more than that, art can be an effective instrument in the sense that it can stimulate both cooperation within society as well as social production.

Of some interest is that Caudwell does not consider proletarian culture, and therefore relies on the bourgeois creators of art – writers, artists – hoping to conquer them for the side of the proletariat so that they can contribute to a positive evolution of the latter since it lacks everything – grandeur, technique, and taste. In this respect it seems not to be too far apart from Trotsky's theories on art in what concerns learning with the bourgeois classes and try, thence from, to build a true proletarian art without nonetheless rejecting the refinement of bourgeois art, trying to pass that very refinement to the proletariat. Like Trotsky, he also felt that proletarian art would be too poor and therefore would carry on being so. Bourgeois art would be of some use for socialism, since good art is, according to him, the one that "encourages cooperation in the revolutionary class in any era is the period's progressive art" (Caudwell, 1937, p.190).

When envisaging a future socialist, or for that matter, communist society, Caudwell is not alone. Stephen Spender also shared the same position in this respect. Spender is clear when he sustains that the artist is not in the position to renounce "the bourgeois tradition because the proletariat has no alternative tradition which he could adopt" and "it is certainly probable that when the workers have been in power for some time, the proletariat will develop a literature which is very different from that of today" (Spender, 1978, p.51).

In his *Illusion and Reality*, Christopher Caudwell calls attention to the "mass production art" as enhancing "mediocrity" "where leisure becomes a time to deaden the mind with the easy phantasy of films…" (Caudwell, 1937, p.198), he goes on establishing an analogy between what he calls "factory production" and "factory art" in the modern capitalist society. As a Marxist he feels the need to warn against the perils of alienation and the settling of a false conscientiousness thus hindering the proletariat's development and, consequently, working counter the ultimate goal of communism – a classless society.

Illusion and Reality is, in the opinion of Samuel Hynes, an original book, when compared with Fox's *The Novel and the People*, and also less polemical (Hynes, 1976, p.257). The originality of his thought lies, we believe, in the way he works upon the concept of

bourgeois culture, the dismissal of proletarian culture and the contribution he expects to receive from the former to reshape society according to the principals of communism. Our opinion may though differ from that of Hynes since it was not without open polemic that the text was received. A favourable review by Auden appeared in the *New Verse* welcoming the new ideas on poetry and society; he was to write "We have waited a long time for a Marxist book on the aesthetics of poetry. Now at last Mr Caudwell has given us such book" (Auden cited in Hynes, 1976, p.258), the poetry of the left had long been waiting for theoretical support and Auden's enthusiasm in welcoming the book is but understandable.

In the last chapter of his book, Christopher Caudwell did not spare Auden, Spender and Day-Lewis from criticism, on the grounds of their bourgeois attitude, notwithstanding the fact that they were on the side of the proletarians, but not really amongst them.

Caudwell's position vis-à-vis his contemporaries can only be understood, in our perspective, because, as a Marxist activist, he felt his duty to point out, somehow severely, what he considered as "weaknesses" of his fellow contemporary writers. Their theory as artists, he supported, was not constructive since they failed to find new contents and forms capable of replacing bourgeois art. He recognized the need for something different in literature and art from what had been produced so far, but it is also true that while he expressed doubts regarding what the new artistic output should be he also failed to see the "dissident potential" and the stupendous endeavour these writers imposed upon themselves in order to create, taking advantage of the existing inner contradictions which are present in any political and social order. Coming from Christopher Caudwell this is somehow awkward since he, himself, also came from a bourgeois background - which is not in itself a sound justification - but, as argued above, he was, to some extent, to defend the refinement of bourgeois art which would in time help to form a true proletarian art, so far only the "expression of the poverty of the proletarian intellectual and emotional life", as Ellen Sypher (1976) put it. The difference, and this might not have been a minor issue, is that he committed himself irreversibly to the organization he truly believed was going to be the driving force towards change. And it was so much so that he volunteered to fight for what he thought of as being a major cause – the fight against fascism in Spain. The question of the individual freedom of the bourgeoisie as opposed to the "unfreedom" of the working classes, as he expresses it, arises again.

Several of his books were successively published posthumously in the years that followed his death. Caudwell's work reflects the social and political worries of his own time, the hope to change having Marxism and Communism as the "lever", as he would say, to attain man's freedom and happiness. He was not to live enough to acknowledge disillusion vis-à-vis the chosen pattern as many of his survivor fellow writers were to experience.

Both Ralph Fox and Rupert John Cornford, known simply as John Cornford[60], already mentioned in this work, came from bourgeois backgrounds, and were both members of the

[60] Rupert was his Christian name given to him after the poet Rupert Brooke, also a Cambridge man and a friend of his parents, deceased in the First World War.

Communist Party of Great Britain, which Ralph Fox himself had helped to found. Their political activism was born out of consciousness and a sense of justice they developed from an early age to which the political, social and economic predicament of their own time was to be decisive. This consciousness and sense of justice was never to be shaken and it was never a question of considering the private element in detriment of the public one. The ground of their political activities was perfectly circumscribed. Their short lives allowed them yet to leave, especially in the case of Fox, a sound literary work which was the product of his own struggle for a better world and of his most cherished beliefs.

When a group of revolutionaries, which included men and women belonging to various left–wing formations, met on the 31st of July 1920 in a hotel in London, and decided to form the Communist Party of Great Britain, Ralph Fox was amongst them together with his friend Harry Pollitt (s.d.), who was to become one of the first party members to work full time, and who would later become its secretary general, being in office when the Spanish Civil War broke out. It was the same Harry Pollitt who, years later, was to invite and accept Stephen Spender as a member of the CPGB, and advise him to join the communist war effort in Spain, as Stephen Spender reports in his autobiographical work *World within World*:

> "Soon after the publication of *Forward from Liberalism*, Harry Pollitt, the Secretary of the British Communist Party, wrote asking me to come and see him……. We agreed, didn't we, over Spain? I said that I wished to help the Spanish Republic by joining their Party. He, for his part, would be prepared to accept my disagreement on certain points. … I accepted this proposal, and Pollitt at once gave me a membership card, telling me that the Party Cell in Hammersmith would get in touch with me." (Spender, 1991, p.211)

We shall come back to this issue later when dealing with Stephen Spender further in the text. So, Harry Pollitt was to comment on Fox's political options this way:

> "There was no personal economic reason why Fox should have joined the Communist Party. He did so from a deep sense of intellectual conviction, and from the moment he took out his Party card his life was dedicated to the cause of communism. Whether as author, journalist or instructor of our factory groups in various parts of London, Fox undoubtedly influenced the thought of thousands of working class men and women, and also of a big sector of professional classes of this country." (Pollitt, s.d.)[61]

The Novel and the People was Fox's theoretical work on English literature, his work as a literary critic and a Marxist scholar, in an attempt to establish a Marxist, and for that matter, an alternative interpretation of the literature of his own country. It may be of some use here to reflect upon the place literature occupies in the society according to his own convictions. Ralph Fox, like most of the young intellectuals of his generation, also sensed the crisis of values England was undergoing, the waste land T. S. Eliot had drawn. So his pretension was to try and examine "the present position of the English novel, to try and understand the crisis of ideas which has destroyed the foundation on which the novel seemed once to rest so securely and to see what its future is" (Fox, 1956, p.51). Elaborating further on the subject of the novel he speaks of its "universal acceptance and appreciation … a

[61] Harry Pollit in http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/SPfox.htm – retrieved on the 24th February, 2013.

creature of our own civilization…" (1956, p.52). While defending the dignity of the novel as an art in its own right, it is somehow interesting to see him getting hold of E.M. Forster himself, whose political views as a liberal humanist were in so many ways opposed to his own, to state his point: "Mr E.M. Forster has pointed out that the great feature which distinguishes the novel from the other arts is that it has the power to make the secret life visible" (1956, p.52). Further in the text he elaborates on some English writers, still alive at the time, E.M. Forster amongst them, and considers "they are still seriously and conscientiously writing novels" (1956, p.55). It seems that, in spite of his Marxist thought, he did understand Forster's endeavour as critic of his own society, as we have already had the opportunity to refer to in our text. Forster's work was not the work of a revolutionary, but it does not lack merit nor does it lack understanding of the undergoing change of values as seen before. Fox was to do him justice.

As a Marxist, a materialist, it was his profound conviction that the material conditions in which the individual's life evolves is absolutely linked to his or her development, hence he was to state that "the novelist cannot write his story of the individual fate unless he has his steady vision of the whole. He must understand how his final result arises from the individual conflicts of his characters, he must in turn understand what are the manifold conditions of lives which have made each of those individuals what she or he is" (1956, p.66). This position features what can be called a systemic reading of the political and social environment of the individual.

Fox defends that neither the novelist nor the poet "is an inheritor of dead property" (1956, p.169), the purpose in the use of the past should be that of change, the same for the use of the present, since "culture is something we must use in order to live, and not merely an object of aesthetic contemplation". According to his own views, heredity plays an important part but the "class struggles, the passions of our own time" are the forces that condition each artistic work and dictate the change that it might bring forth (1956, p.169). We can only share Fox's line of thought as far as this very matter is concerned; since it does not in any way differ from what has been sustained throughout this work. John Brannigan, some decades later, in the introduction to his *New Historicism and Cultural Materialism*, gets hold of Jean Howard's assertion to defend a similar perspective: "literature is an agent in constructing a culture's sense of reality" (Brannigan, 1998, p.3).

Such was Fox's outlook in what concerns the task of the writer and intellectual and the resolute purpose of her or his work. It can safely be inferred from his views that the writer/artist should, in a way, interpret historical development and its impact on the individuals' lives, and, at the same time, as an agent, he or she must be an element to promote change.

Tom Wintringham, a professional soldier, intellectual and writer, was to play an important role in Fox's life and in his political moves. Their friendship dates back from the time they were both students at Oxford University, where they started to be politically active. Like many of their contemporaries, they were touched by the political events and

social conditions of their own time, from hunger marches to heavy unemployment together with censorship at the internal level and the permanent feeling of an impending war that international events would fuel. It was with Wintringham and John Strachey that Fox was to found the "Writers' International"[62]. It was also Tom Wintringham, the inspirer of the International Brigades, who was to receive Fox in Spain, when he changed England for the Spanish Republic on the outbreak of the Civil War, in 1936.

For Ralph Fox the choice between the private and public spheres was never an issue. He always did sacrifice the private in favour of the public and it was this belief and this consciousness that led him to his premature death.

John Cornford (1915) and Julian Bell (1908) were both young men from Cambridge University and from highly bourgeois backgrounds, and as George Gallaway[63] would say, part of the "Golden Generation of the British left". These figures lie on a very remote corner of history and are now little more than obscure shadows of the past, which a more militant left brings forth every now and then. Although Cornford's and Bell's parents, and in the case of the latter aunt as well, were ready to understand and be sympathetic vis-à-vis the young men's yearnings, they were not ready to see them off to a war which, after all, was not theirs. Or so they thought! Virginia Woolf used her influence with friends, namely Kinsley Martin and Stephen Spender himself, whose experience in Spain had not been good (we shall later deal with this question), to try and persuade the young Bell not to go to Spain. Even E.M. Forster, on Mrs Woolf request, was to make an ultimate attempt in the same direction on the grounds that "it would be an immoral act to take part in a war" (Simkin, 1997b), to which Bell was to answer that he had ceased to be a pacifist. Virginia Woolf on her part had expressed her views on the confusion the young generation was making between the private and public issues and the dramatic way they were being expressed, not yet knowing how far their options would take them. She was to lament, and make that lament clear, in *A Letter to a Young Poet*, published by her Hogarth Press, in 1932, that public issues were to be treated in poetry, and she seems not to understand why such brilliant young talents from Cambridge and Oxford would have to engage themselves in such kind of poetry; the age they lived in would not justify such options in art. Let us look at Woolf's own words, as a kind of an introduction: "I gather that you think that poetry is in parlous way, and that your case as a poet in this particular Autumn of 1931 is a great deal harder than Shakespeare's, Dryden's, Pope's or Tennyson's" (Woolf, 1932, p.8).

While the addressee of her letter is "a" John, it is implicit that she meant all those – and at random she chooses excerpts of Auden, Spender, Day-Lewis and John Lehmann (Spender, 1991, p.198) young poets whose writings were to serve their political cause and views. She was shocked by the use of realistic and colloquial language. To this respect she

[62] Which basically had the aim to assemble socialist and revolutionary men of letters in an attempt to put an end to the current capitalist arrangements and establish "a new order based on co-operative effort".
[63] George Gallaway – former British Member of Parliament and author of *Heart of the Heartless World* whose main protagonist is John Cornford.

comments, while developing her assertive point of view:

> "The poet is trying to include Mrs Gape. He is honestly of the opinion that she can be brought into poetry and will do very well there. Poetry, he feels, will be improved by the actual, the colloquial. But though I honour him for the attempt, I doubt that it is wholly successful. I feel a shock … I feel as if I had stubbed my toe on the corner of the wardrobe…. a shock is literally a shock. The poet as I guessed has strained himself to include an emotion that is not domesticated and acclimatized in poetry…" (Woolf, 1932, p.14)

She did not yet know what the outcome of such options was to be. Less than ten years after the publication of this text she would put an end to her life, greatly because, we believe, the world was getting too confused a place for a human being of her sensitivity, without having ever understood, or accepted, or rather wanted to accept, that the public sphere had so ruthlessly interfered with the private, thus ruining people's lives and that, once so, the option left to them was to try and change the current political, social and economic arrangements with the aim to reach a more reasonable state of affairs. She might, we dare say, have failed to understand that the commitment of the younger generation to major struggles became an honest and deeply felt necessity as we shall yet have the opportunity to clarify in this work.

This generation of committed young men was "terribly involved in events and oppressed by them", the words are Spender's (1991, p.159), hence their reaction to them with no reservations, generously, and, those who did not die in the process were later to become disgusted and deceived by them. We shall later deal with their intellectual as well as political reflections when treating Isherwood, Spender and Auden in particular, who were to experience countless difficulties in accepting the course of events, especially of the two decades that followed. They were not the only ones to feel the impossibility and hopelessness to tackle the path of history.

Julian Bell, who was never a communist, but rather cherished socialist views, as Stansky and Abrahams would put it: "His interest in politics was long-standing, and went back to the early days of Leighton Park; he had been a socialist since the General Election of 1922, when the Labour Party became the official opposition; he had talked politics with Pinault in Paris, and in Bloomsbury with his uncle Leonard, and with Keynes'[64] (Stansky and Abrahams, 1966, p.45), had to fight his way through the Bloomsbury heritage and deal with strong inner forces made him divide his own self between what he really and consciously was and wanted and his family background. He was nonetheless to be, to a large extent, faithful to his Bloomsbury entourage. The case of John Cornford was somehow a different matter as we shall see. Julian Bell, having always maintained with his mother the best and closest of relationships was not willing to be the source of her distress, but he was neither to renounce his own desire to join the ranks of the anti-fascist struggle and have an active role in such fight. He was, in the end, to leave for Spain in 1937 to integrate the British Medical

[64] As seen before both Leonard Woolf and Maynard Keynes were the only members of the Bloomsbury Group who were not liberal.

Unit in that country to serve as an ambulance driver, and not, like John Cornford, in the International Brigades.

On the 29th of February of the previous year's issue of the *Times Literary Supplement*, Julian Bell, in an attempt to justify his position, explains that:

> "Like nearly all the intellectuals of this generation, we are fundamentally political in thought and action: this more than anything else makes the difference between us and our elders. Being socialist for us means being rationalist, common-sense, empirical; means a very firm extrovert, practical common-sense of exterior reality" (Bell cited in Simkin, 1997)[65]

Many like him shared the same point of view. Being young, being an artist and an intellectual had to produce some kind of outlook on the world that helped his or her *prise de conscience* that ultimately would lead to a change of the current arrangements. The margin for action was there, the question was how to use that margin.

While at Cambridge both men, Cornford and Bell, engaged in a lively and fruitful polemic about the role of art and the artist as a means of changing the society in *The Student Vanguard* which lasted for quite a long time (Stansky and Abrahams, 1966). Answering Cornford's view on the role of the poet as an agent of change in society, in the March 1934 issue of the *Vanguard*, Julian Bell was to disagree that poets would have anything to do in the matters of changing politics. He expressed himself this way: "… Cornford seems to be very far from clear as to the part to be played by contemporary poets in the revolutionary movement. I would suggest …that poets, as such, have very little part to play in the movement" (Bell cited in Stansky and Abrahams, 1966, p.218). While Cornford sustained the idea that the intellectuals should be able to produce work in such a way that it could leave an impression on the ones who read it and the need of "an intellectual counter-attack by the scientifically minded on the mistakes and deceits of Fascism" (Cornford cited in Stansky and Abrahams, 1966, p.219), Julian Bell believed that "Literature stands above or outside the class struggle" (Bell cited in Stansky and Abrahams, 1966, p.220). The former had clearly developed into a Marxist of the orthodox kind, while the latter had absorbed much of "the Bloomsbury belief in clarity, rationalism and the primacy of art", as Stansky and Abrahams (1966) acknowledge.

The gap of a few years, seven, which separated both young men, might also have played a part in their views of reality, since the younger Cambridge undergraduates of John Cornford's age were to manifest their anger and disgust against fascism in a more radical way. As far as the rising fascism was concerned, Cornford never considered other ways than those of fighting against it unconditional and relentlessly – his career as a promising poet, his parents, his lover or his new-born son came after in the hierarchy of his priorities. The struggle and the party came first. He was to become a man of action. He fought with the inflexibility of principles that so much characterize the true communists – an unshakable

[65] Retrieved from http://spartacus-educational.com/SPbellJ.htm, on 23rd March, 2013.

determination and certainty that "the future is near us"[66], and what we know of his poetry from Spain was a cry against the horrors he witnessed there as his poem *Letter from Aragon* accounts for:

> This is a quiet sector of a quiet front.
> We buried Ruiz in a new pine coffin
> But his shroud was too small and his washed feet stuck out.
> The stink of his corpse came through the clean pine boards
> And some of the bearers wrapped handkerchiefs round their faces.
> Death was not dignified
> We hacked a ragged grave in the unfriendly earth
> And fired a ragged volley over the grave.
> This is a quiet sector of a quiet front.
> There is no poison gas and no H.E.
>
> But when they shelled the other end of the village
> And the streets were choked with dust
> Women came screaming out of the crumbling houses,
> Clutched under one arm the naked rump of an infant.
> I thought: how ugly fear is.
>
> This is a quiet sector of a quiet front.
> Our nerves are steady; we all sleep soundly.
>
> In the clean hospital bed my eyes were so heavy
> Sleep easily blotted out ugly picture,
> A wounded militiaman moaning on a stretcher,
> Now out of danger, but still crying for water,
> Strong against death, but unprepared for such pain.
>
> This is a quiet front.
>
> But when I shook hands to leave, an Anarchist worker
> Said: 'Tell the workers of England
> This was a war not of our own making,
> We did not seek it.
> But if ever the Fascists again rule Barcelona
> It will be a heap of ruins with us workers beneath it'.
>
> (Cornford in Cunningham, 1983, pp.116-117)

We can sense here that lines like "his shroud was too small and his washed feet stuck out", or "The stink of his corpse came through the clean pine boards" or still 'A wounded militiaman moaning on a stretcher" might have shocked Virginia Woolf - for they seem not to fit into the established canons or patterns of poetry she stands for. The 'primacy of art' we referred to above, so characteristic of Bloomsbury, led Mrs Woolf to extend her reflection to "(…) and for a time now poetry has shirked contact with – what shall we call it? – Shall we shortly and no doubt inaccurately call it life?" (Woolf, 1932, p.12). But, in spite of their crudeness and lack of subtlety, who knows if she would approve of it since "you have to be

[66] The words are H. B. Mallalieu's in a reference to the Spanish Civil War, and it was precisely the title he gave to one of his poems on Spain whose last verse reads as follows :

> Reshuffle the alphabet and order words as guns
> To discharge their shells into the doubtful ear.
> Ours is not the unquestioning strength of stones,
> But the future is near us and our line is clear.
>
> (Mallalieu in Cunningham, 1983, p.102)

beaten and broken by things before you can write about them", she once told the young Stephen Spender (Spender, 1991, p.158). And Cornford, more than anyone else, certainly was "beaten and broken by things" to be allowed to write about them, to bring forth all the Mrs Gapes in the world with "the rump of an infant under their arms".

Although Cornford never did think too highly of his poetry, how lucky we all are that he kept on writing and did not follow Virginia Woolf's advice still in *A Letter to a Young Poet* "And for heaven's sake, publish nothing before you are thirty!" (Woolf, 1932, p.26)[67]. Neither Cornford nor Julian Bell were to reach thirty. Cornford was to lose his life precisely on the day he completed 21 years of age, fighting for what he believed in, in some olive field in the Spanish Republic. Julian Bell, for his part, at the age of 29, was to be the victim of the heavy German bombardments while mending the road through which his ambulance was to pass somewhere in Spain in a rescuing mission.

[67] Stephen Spender was to refer to it once again in an interview led by A. Stitt (1978), decades later, in *The Paris Review* – "Stephen Spender, The Art of Poetry", when asked "What do you make of Virginia Woolf's somewhat peremptory insistence than one should not publish before the age of thirty?" to which Spender short and bluntly answered "I think all she meant was that she hadn't published before she was thirty, so she didn't think anyone else should do".

CHAPTER 5

The Longest Journeys: The Survivors of the 'Thirties' Group'

5 "Over there…": The First World War and its Impact on British Writing – E.M. Forster, Joe Ackerley and the 'Thirties' Generation'

Dealing with these men is, as it were, dealing with survivors of a generation that was on the one hand a tormented generation but on the other a generation of courageous men. These men and other fellow writers of the same "group" – Cecil Day-Lewis, Louis MacNeice, Edward Upward, John Lehmann, rather than being called "The Auden Generation", as Samuel Hynes would refer to them, may well be renamed as the "Tormented Generation". Our suggestion has to do with the fact that, considering their sincere endeavour to find some kind of reasoning which might permit them to understand the world they were living in, and in so saying, we are referring mainly to the Thirties', and in a way the Forties', decade in which the external events absolutely determined the path of their individual careers as intellectuals and writers, and that the world events of the epoch did not leave much room to accommodate anything else but a constant anguish and simultaneously an intense search for alternative ways to make the world a bearable place for them and for the future generations.

The outcome of the Spanish Civil War and that of World War Two, the rebuilding of a devastated post-war world dictated also the refraining, the redefinition and consequent shifting of their political militancy in favour of a search to find a comfortable position in the world of arts and letters, in which art still made sense, without, nonetheless, losing sight of their own principles – the world had changed, new challenges were imposed upon them, and without neglecting coherence, new ways were to be found, respecting principles of justice, constantly questioning their position as intellectuals in the society they were to move on from the debris of those two wars, which, for over a decade, were to fuel their thoughts and worries, and were the core of their concerns as firstly individuals and secondly as committed intellectuals, artists and writers. This whole generation of intellectuals, thinkers, writers, poets was indeed "fundamentally political in thought and action", just to paraphrase the unfortunate Julian Bell.

This whole generation was brought up to feel the guilt of not having fought the First World War and of not having had the chance to make a clear and uncompromised start. Those who wrote about the subject were unanimous in what concerns the feelings that were conveyed. Dr Kenneth Sinclair-Loutti[68], who himself was born in 1913, contemporary with both Julian Bell and John Cornford at Cambridge, is very elucidative, while presenting the matter this way:

[68] Dr. Kenneth Sinclair-Louttit was born in 1913, and brought up as a child in Cornwall, and in 1931 he went to Trinity College in Cambridge. Also a committed anti-fascist, he was to be integrated in the First British Medical Unit that left for Spain, to help the Republican forces, on the 23rd of August, 1936, even before he had finished his medical degree (http://www.spartacus.school.com.uk, retrieved on the 23rd March, 2013).

> "Even as a child of eight, I was brought up to feel the absence of those who had fallen in the war… the absence of those who had not come back was a reality felt in those early twenties. Those whose wounds had left them handicapped and my age mates who were fatherless did not allow us to forget the war… in Cornwall, apart from my own generation; I had only been meeting frankly elderly people. Those who had fallen in 1914-1918 and who would have been in their forties when I was becoming a young adult were largely missing." (Simkin, 1997c)[69]

On the other hand Evelyn Waugh, in his *A Little Learning* (1964), was to manifest an identical and somehow bitter sentiment which he expressed as follows: "Some of us were sharply conscious of those legendary figures who were wiped out in the first world war. We were often reproachfully reminded, particularly by the college servants, of how impoverished and subdued we were in comparison with these great men" (Waugh, 1964, p.170).

Still about this very sentiment, one other author must be referred to – Christopher Isherwood, for whom war was throughout his adolescence and adulthood, nearly up to the 60's, almost an obsession. In *Lions and Shadows*, first published in Britain in 1938, he was to manifest his feelings about the war as a real burden: "We young writers of the middle twenties were all suffering more or less subconsciously, from a feeling of shame that we hadn't been old enough to take part in the European war (Isherwood, 1996, p.46). And he would further admit that: "Like most of my generation, I was obsessed by a complex of terrors and longings connected with the idea 'War'. 'War' in this purely neurotic sense, meant the Test of your courage, of your maturity, of your sexual prowess: "Are you really a Man?" (Isherwood, 1996, p.46).

Isherwood feared to be subjected to such test. He was afraid of failure, so he kept denying undergoing such ordeal "I denied my all-consuming morbid interest in the idea of 'war'. I pretended indifference. The war, I said, was obscene, not even thrilling, a nuisance, a bore" (Isherwood, 1996, p.47). Curiously enough, he was to maintain this same position, for various reasons, all his life. His later assumed pacifism can thus be fully understood. But Isherwood's greatest endeavour to come to terms with the war issue manifests itself in the form of a novel, his second – *The Memorial – Portrait of a Family* (1999b). *The Memorial*, apart from containing all the ingredients that created in him a feeling of uneasiness and constant anxiety about himself, his position vis-à-vis his place in the society, his social and political environment, his family, his contemporaries and his own time, deals with the impact and consequences the First World War had on the English society itself. He attempts to explain in *Lions and Shadows*, six years later in 1938, what the novel was to be "it was to be about war: not the War itself, but the effect of the idea of 'War' on my own generation. It was to give expression, at last, to my own war complex and to all the reactions which had followed… an epic disguised as a drawing-room comedy" (Isherwood, 1996, p.182). As its title

[69] This passage was reproduced by John Simkin and taken from Sinclair-Loutit's autobiographical work entitled *Very Little Luggage*. John Simkin is the editor and author of the article featuring the life of Dr Kenneth Sinclar –Loutit (http://www.spartacus.school.com.uk, retrieved on the 23rd March, 2013). Although we entailed all the efforts within our reach to have access to the work, they proved fruitless.

indicates, the novel is indeed the "portrait of a family" with "its births and deaths, ups and downs, marriage, feuds and love affairs" as he states; but more than that it is the portrait of an epoch, of a society utterly marked by the effects of the Great War, with its divides, frustrations, class differences, prejudices synthetized in Isherwood's characters who are from beginning to end entrapped with no possible way to escape, even when the specific purpose – and central element in the whole novel - is common to all those gathered together: the War Memorial of Chapel Bridge, to celebrate the fallen in the First World War – "A genuine interpretation of the times", Kermode (1962, p.73) was to say about *The Memorial*. The time scope goes back and forth between the years 1920 and 1929, a decade which, for Isherwood and for those of his generation, meant stepping into manhood and so decisively becoming full adults. Everything seems to refer to and have something to do with the human condition – with its contradictions – thus turning it into a more universal issue rather than solely with that precise war, which undeniably also has, but the scope of the theme is intended to be broader and, as it were, to expand to similar periods in history with the repetition of the same patterns which are ultimately connected to the human behaviour, to the society as a whole, when confronted with particular phenomena.

Three generations of the Vernon family, in Isherwood's novel, are joined together at the dedication of the War Memorial with the common folk of Chapel Bridge thus giving rise to all sorts of family and class divides. It is clear that their motives are rather dissimilar. Lily, the Vernon mother and senior element, complains about the path of history – the War has equalled them all or why are the names of the deceased in alphabetical order?! Why should they not be listed according to rank?! It seems to be *l'air du temps,* may be the place has become socialist after the war. Even in death the class issue should be well defined. How unfortunate that the upper classes should be mixed with the common folk. It is true that the ceremony gathered family and common locals together, but all of them with different mind settings, they are all there unable to share the same sentiments. They share but the environment, as if they were, each of them, looking at different horizons like those figures out of a Delvaux's painting, musing over something distant and never meeting or looking directly in the eye as if wanting to pass life unnoticed or, for that matter, like Chekhov's characters, eternally dis-encountered.

According to Isherwood, and in spite of his heartfelt lament in the very last line of the *Memorial* "that War…it ought never to have happened" (Isherwood, 1999b, p.111), the whole social atmosphere in England at the time of the First World War pressed young men to join the ranks of the armed forces, and in Wendy Moffat's words "…war fever grew poisonously. And it was poisonously linked to sexual politics" (Moffat, 2010, p.123).

Unlike the case of the war in Spain where young writers lost their lives and some of roughly the same generation survived, E.M. Forster was in time to join up, and so was Joe Ackerley. Forster, although a pacifist, felt urged to take a position – should he follow his Bloomsbury entourage, whose position overtly opposed any participation in it – Leonard Woolf, Litton Strachey, or his former tutor, Goldsworth Lower Dickinson - who refused to

participate, or should he try a solution in which he would feel more comfortable?! It seems all too natural that the then aged thirty six Forster would have chosen pacifism rather than take up arms, following the general political trend of his Bloomsbury friends. But he was being confronted with his own "masculinity", or the "lack" of it. And that was yet another matter he had to account for: his "crippled self". War was there to remind him of it. On the streets of London, the women urged men to participate in this war; also the Press would join in the chorus of patriotism.

Let us take a brief look at an interesting text of popular impact, *"The Call",* a poem by Jessie Pope which appeared in *The Daily Mail* and read this way:

> Who's for the khaki suit
> Are you my laddie?
> Who longs to charge and shoot
> Do you my laddie?
> Who's kin on getting fit
> Who means to show his grit
> And who's rather wait a bit
> Would you, my laddie?
>
> (in Moffat, 2010, p.124)

Another rather interesting example is the then eleven year old Eric Arthur Blair, later to become George Orwell, who saw his little poem *Awake! Oh you Young men of England!* published in the *Henley and South Oxfordshire Standard*. The poem would end in a rather intimidating, if not threatening, way for someone in Forster's shoes:

> Awake! Oh you young men of England,
> For if, when your country's in need,
> You do not enlist by the thousand,
> You truly are cowards indeed!"
>
> (Orwell cited in Stansky and Abrahams, 1973, p.61)[70]

One fact that might have weighed a great deal in his decision to join up in some way might have been his own mother. She admitted the urgency of young men to participate in the war effort, but Morgan Forster was all she had.

Faced with these constraints, the outwardly pressures to join up, also not to join up – his intellectual entourage, and his mother, always his mother … - and his own shackles, his "crippled self" and the guilt (always the guilt!), Forster had to act. His pacifism, though, allowed him to join the British Red Cross and sail to Alexandria where he remained for as long as three and a half years. "The choice of Alexandria was a compromise between his aspirations for romantic escape and Lily's fears about losing him to war" (Moffat, 2010, p.125). He apparently would have liked to have been an ambulance driver in Italy, so dear to

[70] The British historian Peter Stansky together with William Abrahams set up to write an autobiography of George Orwell which first came out in 1972 – *The Unknown George Orwell*. It features the life of the young man, Eric Blair, when still toiling to become a writer, and his subsequent striking change after his many personal experiences, namely as a policeman in Burma, under the British rule. The two authors highlight the writer's political perspectives as well as his sense of mission, and make clear the kind of message he struggled to convey. Samuel Hynes in his *The Auden Generation* quotes from Stansky and Abrahams.

him. But there was his mother, and once again she was against it "and Morgan abandoned the idea, mulling the balance of cowardice and filial devotion in the decision to succumb to her wishes" (Moffat, 2010, p.125). As "non-combatants on the margin of war" (Moffat, 2010, p.123) his decision was respectable, and, already then, would place E.M. Forster in that position that he was to pursue all his life – he was never a man of very radical decisions, either private or publicly, and still, according to Wendy Moffat, his Red Cross uniform "suited him for an ambiguous role" (2010, p.123).

Politically a liberal humanist, he was to pursue and cultivate more individual relations and attach value and importance to the private rather than the collective action. His belief lay in the individual as such, and this he also pursued during this period in Alexandria. Choosing the Red Cross would be a way to help in the effort of war, without, nonetheless, being "in it", and at the same time acting respectably. He was to serve as "searcher in the Wounded and Missing Department of the Red Cross" for the full time he remained in Egypt. His stay in that country proved fruitful for his then future readers, as stated elsewhere in our text, and we, in that capacity, feel indebted to him for what we learned of the British Forces and their practices in an Egypt of the First World War, and of the history of Egypt, but this time viewed from a different perspective – that of natives of an occupied land brought to us by a sympathetic Western perceiver. We feel further indebted to him for his subsequent engagement in bringing forth the works, and their respective English translations, of Constantine Cavafy whom he befriended while there. If Forster was already an attentive observer he became much more so when developing a personal and intimate relationship with Mohamed El-Adle, his first love partner, who left in him an indelible mark, and was decisive in the reshaping of his own politics vis-à-vis the British Empire, and, for that matter, of imperialism itself. *A Passage to India* was to be completed and published in 1924, and a certain view of the relations between colonized and colonizer together with the British attitudes outside the British Islands was certainly the understanding he was able to form from what he experienced also in Egypt.

For Joe Ackerley[71] (born 1896), whom we dare to refer to in this work since he did play a crucial part in Forster's life as one of his kind and whom Stephen Spender was to describe as "English memoirist, dramatist, novelist, poet and editor" (Spender, 1980, p.85), the First World War was seen from a totally different angle. He was the representative of a generation between Forster's and that of the writers' of the "Thirties'", as they are referred to. There was a 14 year gap between the two men. When the First World War started,

[71] Joe Ackerley served in the First World War. On his return, he graduated from Cambridge, Magdalene College, in Law and Literature and in 1927 he started work in the BBC where between 1935 and 1959 he was the literary editor of *The Listener* having edited many of his contemporaries' poetry works. He was to write a biography of E. M. Forster of whom he was a faithful friend until he died, which occurred, despite the age difference, some three years prior to Forster's own death. It is worth noting that Professor Claude J. Summers initiates *The Gay and Lesbian Literary Heritage - A readers Companion to the Writers and their Works, from Antiquity to the Present* (1995), of which he is the editor, precisely with an article signed by David Leon Higdon on Joe R. Ackerley. In it David Higdon writes that Ackerley came to be known as "one of the most brilliant editors of his generation".

Ackerley could be considered almost a child for whom a comfortable household and good public schools was all he knew. The existence of the Empire was obvious and clear evidence, a reality not to be put in question. In a conscription age, lacking political consciousness, he was able to make a clear option vis-à-vis the war, no matter how arguable this decision might have been for various reasons. His participation in the war seemed to be a matter of course, or even, perhaps a somewhat childish decision, we dare think. In his biography entitled *My Father and Myself* (1968) he puts it in a rather light way. His father had served in the British Army during the Egypt Campaign in time to take part in the Battle of Tel-el-Kebir[72]. When the First World War broke out his brother was being trained to enter the father's business, which, according to Ackerley "brought the paternal example again: my mother said: 'thank Heaven my boys are too young to join up' and we offered ourselves to the Army at once" (Ackerley, 1968, p.44). His brother, unlike him, was not immediately accepted and joined up after having solved some health complaints: "In 1918, just before the Armistice he was killed by a whizzbang" (Ackerley, 1968, p.45). Of J. Ackerley's volunteering at the outbreak of the war there was nothing very enlightening as for either ideological or sentimental reasons in his biography other than those stated. He was though to comment briefly, still in his autobiography: "The patriotic fervour of the time, which looks in retrospect so idiotic, was strong" (Ackerley, 1968, p.45). Thus, we can safely infer that propaganda may have also played a part in his decision, as it had done with Forster, together with a flare of youthful temperament and affirmation before the patriarch of the family. As for the complex of the "crippled self", which so much afflicted Morgan Forster, we were not able to trace any signs of it, as such, in his account of himself. His was an affliction of a different kind, and was to occupy him throughout his life: the unceasing search for the ideal companion, a working-class ideal friend, whom he was never to find. His dog Tulip, whose companionship he shared for sixteen years, was in fact to be his most lasting companion, for whom he cherished the most affectionate feelings and was to sacrifice holidays abroad, and to whom he dedicated, in 1956, his book *My Dog Tulip* (2010).

Tulip proved to be, as it were, a functional substitute for Captain Conrad's flower vase of his play *The Prisoners of War* (1925), which was to be the literary result of his experience in the Western Front, as a prisoner of war. After having been wounded, Ackerley fell under the grip of the Germans who sent him, first to a hospital in the north of Germany, Hanover, and later to prison camps both in Karlsruhe and Augustbad, and still, at a later date, to a forced internment in Switzerland until the end of the war. This was his only play and its title is, in a way, self-explanatory. We dare say that the play is a reflection about war itself as well as about "the way in which enforced proximity to others can heighten and distort emotion" (Ackerley, 1925, p.91). The "proximity" referred to was certainly with men, and the feeling of confinement was outstanding. The play is autobiographical. "The hero

[72] The Battle of Tel-el-Kebir took place in 1882, between the Egyptian Army and the British military forces. The aim was to protect, in a broader sense, British imperialist interests in the region and more particularly to protect the Suez Canal which had opened in 1869.

Captain Conrad (myself of course)" is asked by one of the other characters why he is so fond of Lieutenant Grayle, in an overt reference to "a consumptive boy who died of his complaint soon after the Armistice" to whom he felt attracted, as Ackerly himself states in *My Father and Myself* (Ackerley, 1968, p.101).

However, Peter Burton, a literary critic and a "pioneer of gay journalism" in England, in his introduction to the play, in 1988, pertinently remarks that occasional racist as well as classist attitudes can be traced in the play, which at the time might not have made the impression it does make today, but this can be inserted in the idea that a literary text almost inevitably sheds light onto, and in a way is an instrument of, a socio-political and cultural reality. It is thus that Ackerley, in one of his stage notes, in Act One, refers to Grayle as having been educated "at a good public school"; with all the significance it still holds in the English society to these days. Remaining in Act One, Captain Conrad, while talking to the same officer, remarks that "you can't possibly like him. He is not your sort" (Ackerley, 1925, p.95). The same remark appears also in Act II, but this time it is Grayle who, talking to Mme Louis about a fellow officer says "He is rather rough. He is rather a different class. You know" (1925, p.100). Switzerland and the Swiss are often belittled in the officers' conversations throughout the play and dismissed as a minor people; and one should be reminded that Switzerland is precisely the country where the internment camp happened to be located: "Dirty Schweizer" (1925, p.108) is the way, in Act Two, one of the British officers refers to the Swiss doctor who treats him. None of the men reacts to this kind of remark.

The play made its way through a London stage at The Three Hundred Club, on the 5th of July 1925 for one performance only. It is worth noting what the anonymous theatre critic of *The Times* wrote about the play after this first performance "The facts are dark, it may be, but the treatment is full of light – the light of which no audience can fail to be continuously aware when a man, who is deeply and sincerely moved by his subject, writes with a superb naturalness, and a real control of the stage" (cited in Burton, 1988, p.90). The theme of the play seems to have moved audiences as well as reviewers. John Lehmann states, in *Whispering Gallery* – 1st volume of his autobiography, that "it seemed to me that Joe Ackerley's *The Prisoners of War* led to unanswerable conclusions against modern war". For his part, E.M. Forster found the play "a fine thing", as Burton refers to in his introduction to the play.

According to Ackerley, from Arnold Lunn, an intellectual he met while an intern in Switzerland, he learned how to find out about himself and his own sexuality, he was recommended books by Edward Carpenter, amongst others, and "I was now in the sexual map and proud of my place on it. I did not care for the word 'homosexual' or any label, but I stood among the men, not among the women" (Ackerley, 1968, p.103).

Stephen Spender was still to say of him and his relationship with E.M. Forster the following: "A homosexual, Ackerley described his non-sexual friendship with E.M. Forster as

'the longest, the closest, and most influential in his life'"[73] (Spender 1980, p.85). Joe Ackerley certainly was one of Forster's kind, both in sexual terms and in his place within this complex map of intellectual dialogues.

The so-called "Auden Generation" did not have either Forster's or Ackerley's experiences, but rather those of Sinclair-Louttit, Evelyn Waugh and Christopher Isherwood. So the response of all these young men, as concerned intellectuals and writers, to the challenges of the new social and political arrangements – both national and international – was completely different, there seemed to be no way to stop the mental insanity of political rulers. Their work was thus to bear the marks of the disrupted world of the epoch: "A young man living at a certain period in a certain European-country is subjected to a certain kind of environment, certain stimuli, certain influences" (Isherwood, 1996, p.5) can be read in the note to the reader of his *Lions and Shadows*.

The intellectual process that launched them into a continual struggle to take both artistic and political decisions was arduous and at the same time tormented. Profoundly influenced by the previous generation of writers, poets and intellectuals, theirs was a generation determined to find responses, political responses, and artistic responses to the challenges of a world which was rapid and dramatically changing. What is manifest, for example, in the case of Cornford's and Bell's debate on the *Students' Vanguard* whether literature should or should not mingle with politics, was not a single act, it was the concern of almost that entire generation of artists and writers, and the decision to embrace such a commitment was sometimes rather painful.

5.1 Worlds within Worlds: The influent survivors of an entire generation

The premature death of the young writers we dealt with in the previous chapter left no opportunity for them to undergo such experiences as their contemporaries who survived had to be confronted with. Unfortunately, theirs came to be a more immediate struggle with dire consequences for them and for the British intellectual and artistic scene which was deprived of such promising talents.

The survivors had to cope with the ghosts and shadows of World War I, as seen above, and expressed in much of their production. Christopher Isherwood, for example, makes it clear in the *The Memorial*, where he tries, as seen, to bring forth all the ghosts that had been pursuing him ever since he was a boy, the eldest son of a deceased First War fighter. To come to terms with that reality was for him a gigantic task whose process of accomplishment was painstaking.

The war was not, however, the only issue they had to tackle. The deceit caused by the dramatic collapse of their dreams and hopes about the possibility of the establishment of

[73] It is of some importance here to refer that it was through Ackerley that Forster met the man who was to become his lifelong companion – Bob Buckingham (Ackerley, 1968, p.90).

a new social order, which would free the world of iniquities, of discriminations of various nature from political, to religious or of gender, where literature, art, culture would be allowed to flourish freely, was a real source of distress and preoccupation which forced them to revise their own beliefs and convictions. But it did not come out the way they had dreamed of. So, they had to think of new and fairer political and social arrangements, a new social order, that would obviously be based on some kind of social compromise that, without the repressive methods of the Soviet Union, but, on the contrary, in a sound and solid democratic environment, would work out a way to provide the up to then underprivileged classes with a fairer existence. The Spanish Republic had fallen and had been replaced yet by another right-wing and extremely violent dictatorship: Spain was "the graveyard of the British left-wing intellectual and literary movement of the Thirties" (Tolley, 1985, p.55), in its literal and metaphorical sense. Tolley could not have expressed it in a more competent way.

Those young men of the Thirties Group were absolutely convinced and heartedly believed that they could stop the advance of fascism and, if they were to be successful in Spain, they might be able to stop another ravaging world war to happen. Those who generously dedicated much of their energy in the fight for peace accepted with difficulty the British and French governments' policy of non-interference, while the Germans and Italians spared neither means nor efforts to help Franco's success. It was as it were that the then democratic governments had not yet fully realised that their turn would also come unless they took action. Instead, just too close to the beginning of the Second World War were the countries still hoping to be able to avoid war, at least in their own territories, and connived with Germany by signing the Munich Agreement. Also the League of Nations did nothing to stop such madness. In turn, the Russians signed the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact[74], which basically sought to prevent, if possible, or at least to postpone, the invasion of the Russian soil by the Nazis. This was yet another coup difficult to swallow by the revolutionary left. The Moscow Trials, 1936-1938, with the disastrous consequences such a process entailed, were a source of deceit and disillusionment. The current repression in the land of socialism had deprived a more enlightened community of writers and intellectuals of a model to serve as a guide and example – "…The intelligentsia began an aimless intellectual trek in the war time wilderness", as George Woodcock was to state some years later (Woodcock cited in Tolley, 1985, p.56); and we add not only in intellectual and ideological terms but also in geographical terms. One has just to remember the wanderings of Isherwood, or Auden, or for that matter of the German, Italian or Spanish writers, journalists and artists who were forced to emigrate: "The anti-fascist culture was also, to a very great extent, a culture of exile. Its unity was cemented by a crowd of outcasts wandering from one country to another, like the ambassadors of a humanist Europe threatened with annihilation" (Traverso, 2004, p.8), as Enzo Traverso was to put it.

[74] Also referred to as German-Soviet Pact.

For Stephen Spender the Moscow Trials were decisive, as for many others, in what concerns the shift of his political orientation. At first, somehow afraid of making clear what his views about the issue were, he eventually was courageous enough to bring the matter forward in conversations with his peers in the Valencia International Writers' Congress, in July 1937[75]. Auden was later to approve of his attitude on the grounds that truth is always to be brought forth against all odds - "You are quite right. Exigence is never an excuse for not telling the truth" (Spender, 1978, p.31) - were his words. According to Spender himself, this conversation was decisive and marked a turning point in the attitudes of both young writers in what concerns politics in the thirties. The uncritical mood of the Congress, due, we believe, to the undergoing war, and more generally, to the undergoing state of international affairs that hindered the intellectuals and writers from openly criticising what deep down they were conscious of – the impossibility of conniving with that way of handling political matters which chose no means to reach the ends. Fascism at an international scale as witnessed in Spain, involving the German Nazis and Italian Fascists mingling with the Spanish internal affairs, or imperialist attacks performed by the Japanese with the annexation of Manchukuo, required also an international response which writers, intellectuals and men of good will were ready to give. And it was thus that in England, some of them left for Spain, and W.H. Auden and Christopher Isherwood headed towards Asia to cover the Sino-Japanese war. Auden had previously been to Spain to help in the war efforts, "as a stretcher bearer in an ambulance unit", according to Spender (1951, p.247), on the side of the Popular Front, from where he had returned in March 1937.

From his stay in Spain, there is very little information, since, it seems, he was reluctant to talk about it even to his closest friends. Nicholas Jenkins, one of the editors of Auden's works, in an essay entitled *Auden and Spain* says the following: "Auden's time in the Republican part of Spain from 13th January to around 2nd March 1937 is the most intensively mythologized blank-spot in his career" (Jenkins, 1990, p.88) and Stephen Spender was to state that "Yet he returned home after a very short visit of which he never spoke" (Spender, 1951, p.247). Many were the conjectures and speculations about this "blank-spot" in Auden's life, his whereabouts and his actual activities; however, what should be retained is that what came out of it was relevant – *Impressions of Valencia*, a journalist sketch, and his poem

[75] The Second International Writers' Congress in Defence of Culture was held in Valencia, with conferences held also in Madrid, Barcelona and in Paris, in July 1937. An Alliance of Writers for the Defence of Culture was formed on the occasion of the First Congress in Paris, two years prior. In 1936, the Alliance agreed to accept the Spanish proposition to host the next Congress in Madrid. Meanwhile the Spanish Civil War broke out and another solution had to be found. But the Republican government had in the meantime, after Franco's attack on Madrid, moved to Valencia, which then became the capital of the Republic. So Valencia was the chosen place. The Second Congress was to be opened by Juan Negrin, the President of the Spanish Republic himself. It was attended by more than a hundred writers from everywhere – from Russia – Alexei Tolstoy, for example, to Latin American writers like Octavio Paz. André Gide was excluded from participating, on the grounds of the publication of his *Retour de l'URSS* which had not met with the Alliance's expectations, while André Malraux was still to take part. The Congress is remembered as the most important cultural event to have taken place in Spain during the Civil War, but also a highly political event. The western democracies were outspokenly criticised by their non-intervention policies, and the social role of literature as well as the commitment of writers vis-à-vis politics were largely discussed topics.

Spain which is among the best poetry of the Spanish Civil War, and in Spender's words "…he wrote the best poetic statement in English of the Republican case – the poem *Spain*." (Spender, 1951, p.247). It deals with the struggle "but the struggle seen, as it were, by someone whilst living in one camp sympathizes with the other… which while existing externally is also taking place within the mind of the poet himself", as Spender puts it, and further explains "the position outlined in Auden's *Spain* is one of the most creative, realistic and valid positions for the artist in our time" (Spender, 1937b, p.10), and clarifies how Auden's solid understanding of the Marxist ideology as well as a superior capacity to turn ideas into verse contributed to the attained result being also superior when compared with many writers whose ideological bend was closer to Communism.

It is worth noting that in 1937, when the poem was first published, W.H. Auden still felt comfortable enough to have it published in its original form, but he was to revise the poem three years later and, in his *Collected Poems*, whose first edition came out in 1965, he chose not to include lines ninety three and ninety four (stanza twenty one) which read as follows:

> Today the *inevitable* increase in the chances of death,
> The conscious acceptance of necessary murder.
>
> (Auden in Goldman, 2004, p.222)

In the version of the poem published in the volume edited by Valentine Cunningham - *Spanish Civil War Verse* – (which includes also *Impressions from Valencia*) Auden had already made the "necessary" changes, so he thought. These precise lines present a "slight" difference, "slight" not so much in form but in "contents" – the replacement of "inevitable" by "deliberate": "inevitable" has to do with fate while "deliberate" is connected to men's will. And the "acceptance *of guilt*" seems to have appeased his mind. To add "guilt" to the "necessary murder" must have been paramount in his judgement and with which Auden might not, in some way, have felt uneasy or distressed:

> To-day the *deliberate* increase in the chances of death,
> The conscious acceptance of *guilt in the* necessary murder[76].
>
> (Auden in Cunningham, 1983, p.100)

But it is this last version that has usually been published. John Fuller, in his guide to the poet, apropos the same line, refers to it as "The conscious acceptance of *guilt in the fact of* murder" (Fuller, 1970, p.259). It must be true that for a brief period Auden thought himself a Marxist and it is also true that he fell out of it rather soon for the reasons that most of his friends did, Stephen Spender amongst them, and this is thoroughly justifiable and comprehensible as we have argued before. More difficult to accept, though one tends to understand, in our perspective, is the reason why he should have disowned some of his storming political poetry. The contents of this very line "The conscious acceptance of necessary murder", as he originally wrote, does not apply to communists, socialists, Marxists

[76] All italics are mine.

or whatever creed one may have, but the question at stake here must be seen far beyond that. It must be seen from the point of view of self-defence, not in individual terms but in collective terms which makes the "murder" not only basic and fundamental but "necessary" as he bluntly states in his poem. We have briefly touched this precise issue when referring to Joseph Kessler's *Army of Shadow* which dealt with the French *résistence* where he speaks of how hard it was for him "to contemplate murder" and how hard a task it was to recruit people to kill, to carry out "planned assassination", but at a certain stage of the struggle there was no room for such "repugnance" (Lago at al. 2010, p.329). Or still, the case of the Armenian poet - Missak Manouchian - who had advocated participation in the "résistence" movement without nonetheless taking up arms. At a certain point such position proved to be unsustainable before the dimension of the atrocities committed by the Nazi occupier vi-à-vis the French people. He eventually resorted to the use of weapons in defence not of his individual integrity, but in defence of the French nation as a whole, as a collective body. He lost his life in the process, but he found the sacrifice of his own youth worthwhile.

That Auden, under the extreme circumstances he went through, thought of murder as "necessary" with "guilt" in abeyance is only too natural. It seems that the fact that he chose to add "guilt" to "the necessary murder" or "in the fact of murder" might have appeased his conscience, and somehow account for what sometime later his religious feelings were to become. This seems not to have been the only reservations he had when he disowned his more radical poetry. It will require some serious reflection, a mental exercise even, to understand his reasons. The situation in Spain appeared as a much more complex issue than only a fight between Francoists and Republicans as he might have thought in the early beginnings. On the side of those opposing the establishment of a dictatorship of the fascist kind were at least two strong fractions on the terrain – that, although fighting to the same goal – the end of the war and the defeat of Franco and his mercenary troops -, the anarchist revolutionary militias and those (including the Republican government) followers of a Soviet trend. They proved to be two incompatible sides[77] which might have contributed to the outcome of the Spanish Civil War. Auden, it seems clear, sympathized with a more revolutionary position without the constraints imposed upon the fighters by the Soviets. But he believed that – as in line 77 – "To-morrow, perhaps the future" and the "rediscovery of romantic love" (line 81) "all the fun under Liberty's masterful shadow" (line 82) as opposed to a more immediate reality "But to-day the struggle" with which he ends lines 88 and 92, "To-day the makeshift consolations" which he is able to find in the "shared cigarette" in the "cards in the candle lit barn" or in the "masculine jokes" (lines 97-98) all this and the "Fumbling and unsatisfactory embrace before hurting" (Auden in Cunningham, 1984, p.).

[77] The English film director Ken Loach, in his 1995 film *Land and Freedom*, featuring the life of an English unemployed worker who goes to Spain to join the Republican fight against Franco, competently discloses many of the existing problems within the ranks of those involved in that fight and how, gradually the Soviet line gained ground against a more revolutionary anarchist trend. Hugh Thomas refers to this issue in his *History of the Spanish Civil War* and is inclined to hold the Soviets responsible for the defeat.

To remain with *Spain* – it is quite obvious that a political trend of a Marxist character is expressed in his analysis of the current historical facts and the whole "atmosphere" of the poem is a cry and a call for the struggle to put an end to such predicament. Many other poets did likewise, and before the atrocious deeds carried out by mankind, it came as natural that he had to intervene, as it were, with the available weapons – those of his own and sophisticated art, and by so doing adding his voice to an enormous chorus claiming justice. Having experienced the communists "in action" on the terrain and being the witness of subsequent events like the Moscow Trials, or the German-Soviet Pact – to mention just a few - the revolutionary fervour gave rise to a less dispassionate analysis of the current world politics. He did not want, so it seems, to be compromised by his attire to certain positions, as expressed in *Spain,* and set himself the task to revise his political orientation, always pursuing what he considered paramount – the truth, as he was to manifest to Stephen Spender, as referred elsewhere in the text; it seems that Auden - the individual, reached there the point where he had to make a choice, and so he did – he put his private-self first, that is to say, the imperatives of his moral consciousness thus sacrificing the public ones.

5.2 The Age of Anxiety: the Auden-Isherwood Collaboration

> "But the new barbarian is no uncouth
> Desert-dweller; he does not emerge
> From fir forests; factories bred him;
> Corporate companies, college towns
> Mothered his mind, and many journals
> Backed his beliefs".
>
> W.H. Auden, *The Age of Anxiety*

There are epochs in which the historical process evolves in such a way that sometimes the stylistic or literary rigour comes second in the preoccupations of the writers/artists who choose as their primary commitment to contribute to a change of the current political and social arrangements. This was precisely what happened to W.H. Auden and Christopher Isherwood when they decided to release their joint works and implement their dissemination both in print and in performance.

It is in this perspective that their collaboration should be analysed. Sometimes brilliant, sometimes rather clumsy, it cannot be said of this collaboration that it was exempt of defect, but on the other hand, it must be noticed that it was effective, and to a certain extent it did serve the authors' intention and sense of urgency that the current political and social predicament did require.

The point would be that of producing material for the stage – as a more immediate means to reach the general public - which would simultaneously amuse, entertain and interest an audience, and not of a minor importance, convey the underlying message. The productions were successful, thus fulfilling the authors' expectations. They did manage to interest a large audience similar to that of the popular comedies, so dearly cherished in

England, but working upon relevant subject-matter. In this they have succeeded, thus justifying the quality they displayed which was not at the time always consensual, as we shall yet see. Claude Summers comments on it this way:

> "The artistic union of the decade's finest poet and its most sensitive prose stylist did not produce great literature, at least in part because of the overtly political stance the collaboration assumed. They so heavy-handedly imposed political dogma upon the plays that dramatic development and thematic coherence suffered" (Summers, 1981, 63).

For Stephen Spender, while not denying a "certain" poetic quality, the Auden-Isherwood plays are the object of severe criticism, and he regrets that "the victory has not been gained without a certain number of concessions which amount to a certain loss of poetry" (Spender, 1978, p.55), and, stronger than that is the fact that he considered that these concessions were not a good literary influence on writers younger than Auden and Isherwood, who found it only too easy a task to imitate.

The collaboration between the two writers encompasses four pieces whose publication in England saw the light as follows: *The Dog Beneath the Skin or Where is Francis?,* 1935, *The Ascent of F6*, 1936, *On the Frontier*, 1938, and *Journey to a War*, 1939[78]. Except for *Journey to a War*, which is a travel book describing their joint trip to Asia to report the Sino-Japanese War, all the other pieces are plays whose contents are undisguisedly political. With the exception precisely of the travel book, due to its very nature, they seem to attain some form of pedagogical goal, which, although arguable as it might be, is somehow understandable under the circumstances, in a decade of outspokenly political concerns: at stake was the struggle against poverty, fascism and war. So, theirs was a commitment meant to be public.

5.2.1 *Journey to a War*

Journey to a War, first published in March 1939, is also political in a very obvious manner and reports the multitude of situations they were to undergo throughout the seven months the "expedition" was to last. The book opens with a sonnet by Auden dedicated to E.M. Forster, which reveals much of what the older writer meant to them as a way to stick to someone or something to find a sense for things happening. Let us consider the first stanza of Auden's sonnet:

> Though Italy and King's are far away,
> And Truth a subject only bombs discuss,
> Our ears unfriendly, still you speak to us,
> Insisting that the inner life can pay.
>
> (Auden and Isherwood, 1986b, p.5)

The 1973 edition, revised by both its authors, still bears the foreword of the first edition to which a section entitled *Second Thoughts* – two very short texts signed by each

[78] As a curiosity the Stansky and Abrahams book *Journey to the Frontier*, featuring the lives of John Cornford and Julian Bell, came out of both *On the Frontier* and *Journey to a War*.

author – has been added. With a considerable length of time between the two editions, the authors found it useful to explain a few details time had allowed them to reflect upon with somehow a lesser passion. Auden considers both the literary and the political issues: while recognising that after having reread the sonnets in *Journey to a War*, he felt shocked "to discover how carelessly I had written them", but at the same time he found the contents worth rescuing, which he did by revising the work for the later edition. This confirms, in a way, what both Spender and, later, Summers pointed out as far as the quality of these works was concerned. But Summers was also to consider the travel book "among the period's most interesting exploration of the nature of war, a subject that preoccupied young writers of the 1930's" (Summers, 1981, p. 67).

Also to be noticed is Auden's brief explanation of the political substance of their book. Both young men were already convinced – Auden calls it a "hunch" - that the outcome of the whole situation and the future of China would be in the hands of the Communists, with Mao Tse Tung leading them, and not with Chiang Kai-shek and the Kuomintang . But this is not what in fact they openly expressed in the book, blaming them for letting themselves be fooled by the propaganda "so zealously spread by certain Western journalists" concerning the "innocuous" characteristics of the Chinese communism, he was to explain. He regrets the fact that the American State Department did not feel, as they did, the same"hunch", so that "the contemporary political climate might be more pleasant", and he concludes that no matter what one's ideological bends are "the first maxim of realpolitik is that one must never back a certain loser" (Auden and Isherwood, 1986b, p.8). They were both nonetheless to place themselves clearly on the Chinese side.

Christopher Isherwood's text is not so interesting as Auden's, it is but a personal response to the various criticisms targeted at him, but, nevertheless, he felt that "a surprisingly varied assortment of information" displayed justified his not apologising for the republication of the original text. As for the scope of information Isherwood mentions, we can only agree. But it is not all, and he is also right for not apologising, because his section of the book, the "travel diary", based on the notes both Auden and himself had collected throughout the journey with their outlook on the political situation China was undergoing together with the political actors *in loco*, their methods and ways, are well and minutely depicted; their acute judgement adds to the understanding of the political developments, as well as of a culture which is in so many ways different from the Western culture of which both Auden and Isherwood were high dignitaries. This part of the book is entirely Isherwood's responsibility. Auden was responsible for its poetic part, having chosen to take the subject of war, not that specific war but war in abstract terms. The protection by the authorities, both English and Chinese they were the recipients of, might, in our perspective, have hindered them from stating their own outlook on the whole affair of the war, as well as its contours, more freely.

The remarkable Englishness of the two young writers was in no way disguised, together with a clear bend of their political stand, with no intention to moralise, regarding

the conflict, as it were, through the eyes of liberal humanists that in the end they really were, or rather, they had by then become.

The theme of war was, throughout his life, a recurrent one. His political position in a world full of contradictions was also a matter he constantly dealt with. It would be interesting to reproduce here a passage of Christopher Isherwood's diary, in the month of January 1941, with the Second World War going on for almost two years, where he reflects upon the phenomenon of war and expresses his political misgivings apropos a text by E. M. Forster who had been sent to him by a friend. This is one of the rare occasions, if more there are, we see Isherwood criticising "the old master", as it were. Here is what he then wrote:

> "M. sent me a pamphlet by Forster, called *Nordic Twilight*[79]. It makes me sad to see Morgan writing this kind of thing. Not that it isn't decent and frank and honourable. He begins, "This pamphlet is propaganda. I believe that if the Nazis won they would destroy our civilization. I want to say why I think this…." And he goes on to describe how Hitler suppressed "decadent Art", burnt the books and is now interfering with the cultural life of Czechoslovakia, Poland, Norway, etc. – which is all very true.
>
> But what is this "civilization"? For Morgan, it means the right to freedom of self-expression. "To feel free is not enough. It may be enough for the mystic, who can function alone and can shut himself up and concentrate even in a concentration camp. The writer, the artist, needs something more. Freedom to tell other people what he is feeling".
>
> Morgan fully admits that this self-expression may take political forms; yet he seems amazed that it should be countered by political means, i.e. violence. Talking and writing, like any other acts, produce results in the external world. It is absurd to be surprised by this fact. You can't just plump for irresponsible, anarchic freedom of expression, and then sit back and say you are "civilized". The communists, at least, don't make that mistake. It is the classic fallacy of liberalism.
>
> Certainly, life would be ten thousand times worse under the Nazis. Churchill, from his point of view is absolutely right when he says this, and absolutely right to fight Hitler. But from Morgan, our philosopher, we expect something more. Somebody in the midst of this turmoil, has got to keep his head, preserve his judgement and see the war as *a whole*, as a tragedy for which we are all responsible." (Isherwood, 1997, pp.136-137)

Isherwood talks about "the classic fallacy of liberalism", but we shall see him later

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[79] In Lago's, Hughes' and Walls' (2008) introduction to the *BBC Talks of E. M. Forster 1929-1960* it is acknowledged that the BBC, very cleverly, used Forster to serve not only the goals of the station but also the British Government interests in maintaining the *status quo*. We have dealt with this question already when treating the materials of the volume. Lago clearly states that "when Forster did propagandize, he argued that patriotism meant acknowledging the necessity of art. Forster openly equated support for the arts with British civilization itself, urging listeners and readers to view protection of speech and creativity as tantamount to defence of England's pleasant land. The BBC was not blind to these attitudes and it even encouraged Forster's campaign against censorship, showing him as an example of Britain's enduring democratic values". Lago identifies two goals achieved by these talks: "one defined by different governmental or administrative authorities and the other crafted and adhered to by him alone. Yet both roles correspond to Forster's influence over a growing audience at home and especially abroad. For Forster, this influence meant perpetuation and enhancement not only of British civilization but also of liberal values" (Lago's at al., 2008, p.23). This position was certainly what made the young Isherwood question Forster, since he had, at the time, already made up his mind in relation to the country he was born in, and he might have also known that the BBC itself did not always accept collaboration unless it matched the patterns set by the station. Lago mentions that when "broadcasts were deemed too politically sensitive by the Ministry of Information, however - including two successive scripts by G. B. Shaw in 1940 and J. B. Priestley – they were suppressed altogether" (2008, p.23).

trying to retrieve the liberal values they so fiercely criticised, and maybe not fully conscious that they were in fact doing so. It seems that the current affairs of the time did not permit them to carry on defending what they had done till then if they were to preserve some kind of intellectual honesty. We are to witness Isherwood, let alone W. H. Auden, shifting his militancy to realms where he would feel more comfortable.

A parenthesis should be allowed here though to see how the issue of war continued to dwell in his mind. In the year 1945, already in the United States for some years, Isherwood recuperates pre-Second World War events in his novel *Prater Violet* (1945). Although written in a light tone, almost of a comedic character, the novel is no less serious than anything else he had written about the same period. It goes back to the 30's, and although in so many ways it reminds us of the Berlin Stories, Isherwood develops his scenes in London. It is, like most of his work, of an autobiographical character where Christopher is the young and naïve narrator – this feature he kept from the *Berlin Stories* – he is William Bradshaw, Christopher, Christopher Isherwood…

Isherwood's honest quest for the role of the artist and the writer is not in question here, but simply adjusting it to his frame of mind at a later stage of his life. According to Summers, *Prater Violet* is "unobtrusively informed by its author's newly discovered faith in Vedantism …it is ultimately a religious novel. For all its obvious similarities of the earlier books, the book signals a departure for Isherwood and a new beginning" (Summers, 1981, p.70). Spiritually, he seems to have found tranquillity and solace in religion, and he was able to look at what up to then may have been presented as unsurmountable problems – his sexuality, for example – in a much more objective and "natural" way. It is thus that from the 60's decade of last century, and until his death, his fight was to be focused on equal rights for homosexuals. And the valuable contribution he gave to that very cause was inestimable.

Prater Violet is thus the work of a writer, in his early forties, still at odds to find purpose in art and to deal with the role of the artist in the society in modern times. One sees him here still toiling with the question of identity – a father he lost when he was a child needs to be replaced by another, and it is in Friedrich Bergmann (Berthold Viertel), the Austrian film director working for a film company in London whom the young Christopher – the eponymous narrator in the book and a would-be writer - joins to produce the script for Bergmann's film that he chooses to fulfil that void. Bergmann plays the role of father in Chistopher's life the same way that the young man accepts to be his son. They seem to have loved each other very much and the Austrian director set himself the role to pose to Christopher all the uncomfortable questions about the most diverse issues – their role as artists and intellectuals, the disruption of Europe, the rising fascism, the coming war which he sensed: all these to "corrupt" the young man still somehow astray. Christopher, himself, raises the class issue here since he finds it difficult to produce reasonable work because of his class origins, even if he sympathises with socialism and believes to be on the "right side", he still considers himself a "snob" knowing solely the language of the bourgeoisie. This is also a very recurrent issue in Isherwood's work. He sums up in *Prater Violet*, once more, all

his ghosts, his insecurities, his lack of commitment to the causes he is convinced he believes in, the *liaison* with the figure of his domineering mother, will he be able to set himself free or will he be the eternal truly Weak Man?! And the war, always the war he so fiercely wants to shun from his thoughts.

As a witness of unique events in the first half of the twentieth century he kept writing about his epoch. Intentionally, in *The World in the Evening* (1954)[80], Isherwood revised the history of a recent past with the knowledge of someone who had partaken in the process. And although Christopher Isherwood describes the novel in a letter to Upward as "terribly slipshod, and vulgar and sentimental at times in a Hollywoodish way" (Summers, 1981, 79) it is hardly so. Summers considers it to be, perhaps Isherwood's most problematic novel (Summers, 1981, p.79), he is very likely right. With E.M. Forster he learned the "tea-tabling" technique, a technique he most admired in the older writer and which he uses, for example, to report the death of Elizabeth, Stephen Monk's - the main character, a bourgeois and wealthy Anglo-American aged thirty seven - wife. It may be sentimental, to a certain extent, since it deals with various and diverse kinds of love which Isherwood comfortably accommodates in order to give them a happy end, as he indeed does - but the whole construction of his plot develops smoothly and as for the "vulgarity" Isherwood claims the novel to have, it can hardly be found, if it can be found at all.

He deliberately chooses issues that are as much personal as they are political and, once more, summons all his ghosts – fear, as in all his earlier works, from *All the Conspirators*, going through the *Memorial* or the *Berlin Stories*, homosexuality, war, guilt and cowardice, also his native England. Even the mild disposition and understanding of some of his closest friends, among them Forster and Lehmann, did not make it any easier for him to cope with that reality. He had deserted Europe at the outbreak of World War II, and even the Spanish Civil War, in which, in the end, he did not partake remain for him always an unresolved issue which he brings forth in *The World in the Evening*.

His own criticism had perhaps to do with the fact that in this novel everything is so immaculately perfect, all characters are, ultimately, a decent lot. Stephen Monk is guilty of wrongdoings, he is self-centred and has weaknesses difficult to accept in an individual, he manipulates, he betrays, but he dramatically improves throughout Isherwood's narrative because not only does he recognise his own faults but also because they are told in retrospect. In this respect, *The World in the Evening* is a "*Bildungsroman*, a novel of education" as Summers points out (1981, p.91). We are to find Stephen Monk a "renewed" and committed person in the last part of the novel. He thus walks away with the readers' sympathy, and Stephen Monk is certainly "among Isherwood's most fascinating characters" (Summers, 1981, p.81). But, looking at Monk's character dispassionately some other questions may arise. He is a highly bourgeois young man for whom the political and social

[80] *The World in the Evening* owes its title to *The Progress of the Soule*, a poem by John Donne (Summers, 1981, 80).

conditions around had not moved him into changing the predicament of the underprivileged or to get involved in, for example, the cause of war which sweeps the whole novel. He then learns by dint of his own experience and setbacks to sympathize with causes which were not his or of which he was only reminiscently aware, but is willing to join. One can be left to wonder if this *Bildung* is, in the end, cogent enough, that is to say, of a lasting and consistent character.

The author takes full advantage of what was his life of constant wanderings around Europe, from Germany to Denmark, Belgium or Portugal to fully situate, historically, his characters and their subsequent actions. There seems to be no relevant historical event that he did not allude to in *The World in the Evening* – First World War, Spanish Civil War, Second World War, Pearl Harbour, African Campaigns, and so forth.

For a further appreciation of *The World in the Evening,* let us consider what E. M. Forster had to say about it to his younger friend. In a letter, dated July, 1954, acknowledging the reception of a copy of the book, the old writer starts by saying "I am fascinated with the book, despite disappointments and difficulties …. It keeps approaching to and then receding from the world of my own experiences, like something moving in the dusk, and so is more provocative than anything else you have written" and carries on "My feeling is that there is no specific moral in the book, but that all characters who are worth anything are learning something – to be simpler, to be alone, not to gloat even about sin, not to attack the hate-disease directly, to lie open to intimations of unity should they happen to come" (Zeikowitz, 2008, p.156-157). Forster speaks of "a world of my own experience" which is as much his as it is Isherwood's for *The World in the Evening* is, as it were, a slice of history where Isherwood's own story unfolds.

5.3 Aspects of the Theatre: the Auden-Isherwood Plays in context

Writing for the Group Theatre[81] programme, 1st October, 1935, Auden presented a short text entitled *I Want the Theatre to Be*.

It is worth noticing some of his assertions in the text to try and understand the nature of the poetic drama that both he and Isherwood produced, which may suffer from some infirmities as seen before, in order to, somehow, build a more tolerant judgement while obviously agreeing with most of the constructive criticism that came from their contemporaries Stephen Spender and John Lehmann or, more recently, Samuel Hynes and Claude Summers, which run more or less in the same direction. Stephen Spender, their closest friend and fellow writer, may have most likely written the harshest piece of criticism

[81] The Group Theatre – an experimental theatre group - was directed by the dancer and stage director Rupert Doone. As Group Theatre, it was active in the years between 1932 and 1939. Robert Medley, cofounder of the Group Theatre, and Doone's life long companion, did most of the set designs for Doone's productions. The Group staged plays by Auden-Isherwood (*The Dog*, *F6* and *On the Frontier*), Stephen Spender (*Trial of a Judge*), and also by T.S. Eliot and Louis McNeice. Benjamin Britten produced music for the plays staged by the company, Spender's *Trial of a Judge* amongst them.

on their joint work, in an article published in the *New Writing* on *The Poetic Dramas of W.H. Auden and Christopher Isherwood*. Commenting on the quality of the plays, Spender acknowledges their inferiority when compared to Auden's single poems and says of Isherwood's characters that they lack the "subtlety and profundity of his other characters" (Spender, 1938b, pp.102-103). In a letter to Christopher Isherwood dated October 30, 1936, he again expresses some reservations regarding the Auden-Isherwood's other play *Ascent of F6*, which he had actually signed in the Autumn issue of the *Left Review* hoping "you won't feel I have been unfair" (Spender, 1980, p.123). The same criticism, slightly more elaborate, was to be repeated in *The Thirties and After*, whose first publication dates from 1978, this time qualifying it as "rather disappointing" (Spender 1978, p.55). It seems also that from a purely scenic view point he reckons that "everything is made as important and public as possible; all the elements of publicity are exaggerated to an extent which is incredible in real life and therefore doubly incredible on the stage" (Spender, 1978, p.55).

Auden contends that the film industry and its development "deprived drama of any excuse for being documentary" and he further adds that "it is not in its nature to provide an ignorant and passive spectator with exciting news" (Hynes, 1977, p.399). As opposed to the film, the subject of drama is linked to what is familiar and recognisable by "the society or generation" in which it is produced. There is, according to the writer, a remarkable difference between the characters in the novel and those in the drama, the former being of an analytical nature while the latter are necessarily simplified, they should be though "easily recognisable" and "over life-size". The speech in drama should, therefore be "undocumentary". While admitting that the general and the universal should be the concerns of drama as opposed to the particular and local, he acknowledges that drama can only deal "with the relations of human beings with each other, not with the relation of man to the rest of nature" (1977, p.401).

It is clear that both writers, aware of the distortion of values, of the chaos which was rapidly being established, had to take sides, and in these poetic dramas the "side" they chose was made obvious[82] since that "chaos of values is not consistent with the standardization of thought" as Auden and Day-Lewis wrote in the 1927 edition of the Oxford Poetry (Auden and Day-Lewis, 1927).

5.3.1 *The Dog Beneath the Skin*

Written in 1935, *The Dog Beneath the Skin* bears the mark of its time; a time when a

[82] Apropos the "chaos of values", it is worth mentioning the preface of the Oxford Poetry 1927 volume, signed by W. H. Auden and Cecil Day-Lewis, while still Oxford undergraduates, but in search of a line and a voice suitable for the current times. The environment, we support, absolutely conditions and determines values rather than the other way round. Here is what they wrote: "…the chaos of values which is the substance of our environment is not consistent with the standardization of thought, though, on the political analogy, it may have to be superseded by one. All genuine poetry is in a sense the formation of private spheres out of a public chaos: and therefore we would remind those who annually criticise us for lack of homogeneity, first, that on the whole it is environment which conditions values, not values which form environment…." (Auden and Day-Lewis, 1927, p.3).

war seemed to be in abeyance, but a time when the dimension of the conflict to come was not yet measurable.

Very briefly, in *The Dog Beneath the Skin*, Alan, the main character and hero, sets off for a long search across Europe to try and find Sir Francis, the Pressan Ambo village long-lost heir, and bring him back. Sir Francis is in fact accompanying him disguised under a dog-skin. When Alan returns with the dog, distressed on the account of his unsuccessful search, Sir Francis gets out of his dog-skin and preaches to the villagers criticising them for their unkind and condescending manners towards their inferiors upon whom they absolutely depend for their wellbeing and pleasures. He confesses himself shocked with what he sees, and declares that he renounces the inheritance he is entitled to receive since the villagers belong to an army which is not his, therefore implying they are enemies. He now intends to join 'the army on the other side'.

The authors, on the one hand, place themselves, implicitly, "on the other side" but, on the other they fail to clarify what "the other side is, or rather, what the other side is like. Nazis and Fascists rather than being what they in fact were, were portrayed as lunatics thus not allowing the audience to have an accurate perception of the current political predicament. For these reasons, if not for others, their creation of a decaying world seems to have failed since they were rather at a loss to depict the true magnitude of the already existing chaos.

At this point it would be interesting to revert to the issue of "the other side". As Spender well observes, the reason why they are not able to present "the other side", the side of the workers, of the underprivileged, is because "whereas they know a great deal about the side of the bourgeoisie – from which they consider themselves disinherited – they know far less about the workers' side which they believed themselves to have joined" (Spender 1978, p.58)[83]. This sharp observation is consistent with what Christopher Caudwell expressed in his criticism of Auden – true, Auden knew which side the fight should take place, but he failed to be efficient in his capacity to appropriately convey his convictions, precisely because they were but the intellectual perception of what was right, as contended before when dealing with Caudwell's work *On Liberty*, therefore easy to state where they were, but difficult to elaborate upon. But this seems to be, in our perspective, a problem somehow difficult to tackle. Whenever intellectuals, as a class, try to intermingle with other classes different from their own, no matter how sympathetically they commit themselves and how important the causes they advocate may be, they are never entirely their own, and the risk is that of remaining marginalized, or rather self-marginalised. Alan Sinfield also toiled with this precise question, thus anyone living and leading a struggle within a

[83] It is worthwhile noticing that in the recent film – 2012 -, *Christopher and his Kind,* made by the British for the BBC (starring Matt Smith as Christopher Isherwood), this perception is rather important since the script contemplates exactly this feeling - thus crediting Spender's remarks. In one scene held in the Weimar Berlin, sitting on a garden bench, Auden observes to Isherwood how little they knew of the working class, and what they knew of it was solely the companions they shared their beds with – that much they knew, not more.

determined social environment necessarily and unescapably has to deal with class issues, since he is affected by them, so that "whenever intellectuals intervene in any subculture, they will necessarily speak from their class position as intellectuals…" (Sinfield, 1998, p.159), therefore the intellectuals who, for ideological reasons, join other classes or groups are most of the times not entirely committed to them, they are there provisionally, and hardly ever "organically", just to borrow Scott Wilson's idea (1995, p.256).

5.3.2 *The Ascent of F6*

In the following year, 1936, *The Ascent of F6*, a tragedy in two acts, comes out[84]. In the play Michael Ransom stands as Britain's best climber who embarks on an international expedition to reach the summit of a mountain – the highest world mountain up to then never climbed - on the border of a British colony - British Sudoland - and the border of an imaginary colony of Ostnia[85], also an imaginary and rival country, Ostnian Sudoland after the insistence of his brother, a cabinet Minister, and his own mother to whom he is closely attached and desperately willing to please. The expedition has political implications. The Empire then is in full bloom. It is necessary to maintain the people's attention to the grandeur of Britain since they seem to be rather disinterested. The expedition is to be broadcast, thus serving also the purpose of stirring the public opinion. The British are aware of the Ostnians' preparations for the F6 climbing, therefore, reaching the peak first would guarantee their supremacy as a superpower over the rival Ostnia – the British flag was the one to be planted there, so that the prestige of the nation would be saved, the wealth of the colony guaranteed, and the interest of the people regained.

The expedition is coloured by too many vicissitudes wherein he loses all the elements of his climbing party, thus reaching the summit of F6 alone. For Michael Ransom, the hero, it is a personal issue. His motives are not straightforward. He has to pass the Test – that so much afflicted Isherwood himself - and in so doing he is rather in pursuit of power, at an individual level, dragging along his own companions for whose death he is entirely responsible.

In his hallucination, at the summit, he is faced with the ghosts of his own guilt, just yet to die, head down on his mother's lap (the Evil Mother). Michael Ransom is ultimately exposed as a Truly Weak Man. All the themes found mainly in Christopher Isherwood's early work - especially in *All the Conspirators, Lions and Shadows* and *The Memorial*, seem to come together in *The Ascent of F6* – they were haunted as it were by the ghosts of the First

[84] This play was entirely written in Sintra, Portugal, where Christopher Isherwood was living at the time with Heinz Nyedermeier, his German companion, who, with him, had fled Germany on the grounds of Hitler's politics, and where he was later to be joined by Auden, precisely with the firm purpose to write the play, which they eventually did accomplish.

[85] OSTnia stands for Ost as opposed to West almost as a premonition of what was to become the partition of Germany as a country into two distinct countries (zones) of Eastern (therefore Ost) and Western influence in the aftermath of World War Two. The same country is recurrent in the Auden-Isherwood's other play *On the Frontier*.

World War, as contended before, and in this very play these ghosts seem to have all been summoned and made visible - heroism, war, corruption in politics, search for power, evil mothers, truly strong men, truly weak men, which all together build a highly confusing play, at points hard to discern, but which in the opinion of Claude Summers "its discovery of the will to power in an Oedipal source is both annoyingly simplistic and unconvincingly realised" (Summers, 1981, p.65) . Stephen Spender, in turn, comments on the "priggishness" of the Ransom character, which is in his view a more important feature than his being fascist, "which is after all a doctrinaire point", and on the fact that the authors "instead of giving the consequences of Ransom being the kind of person he is, you give an acute piece of analysis" (Spender, 1980, p.123). In our perspective, Auden might have had his share here since psycho analysis was his chosen realm. Being a prig is, for Spender, more important than the fact that he is in love with his mother, "I can't help taking it for granted that all Wystan's and your heroes are in love with their mothers", Spender was to comment in a letter to Isherwood (1980, p.123).

It is E. M. Forster that appeared to the rescue of the two young men, and his mild comments are worth considering. In his review of *Ascent of F6* in the *Listener*, Morgan Forster suggests that the reader should analyse the play in the light of a 'politico-economic' issue, thus for him "the scale is a political ramp", although he also considers the individual level, and Ransom's demons, the hero at odds with his stifling mother – something Forster is only too ready to understand since the same applies to him as well, fitting both the Ransom character and Forster himself within the boundaries of the "Freudian pattern". It is also worth noting that Forster picks up Henrik Ibsen's *Peer Gynt* lyric[86] final scene and compares it to the Auden-Isherwood's *Ascent of F6* but bitterer. Both authors ultimately question "mother-love" (Forster, 1936a, pp.189-191). *The Ascent of F6* brings forth also the issue of

[86] In the Auden-Isherwood's play, Ramson ends up exactly the same way Ibsen's character Peer Gynt did, in the play bearing the same name, that is: calling for his mother and seeking refuge in her lap, only Solveig, unlike Rmson's mother, sings a lullaby for Peer. Although nothing is said about Peer's dying one can only presume that it means he does. (Ibsen's scenic note is also added here since it express Ibsen's wish to have that precise effect: "[*he clings to her tightly, burying his face in her lap. There is a long silence. The sun rises.*]") Here are the last words exchanged between Peer Gynt and Solveig:

> PEER GYNT: My mother – my wife! Oh purest of women –
> Hide me, oh hide me, within your love.
> SOLVEIG (singing softly): Sleep now, dearest son of mine,
> I will cradle you, I will guard you
> Child you have nestled on your mother's knee
> We two have been playing all the livelong day.
> Child, you have lingered at your mother's breast
> all the livelong day. God bless you my joy.
> Child, I have held you close against my breast
> all the livelong day. You are weary now.
> Sleep now, dearest son of mine,
> I will cradle you, I will guard you.
> Sleep and dream, dearest son of mine.
>
> (Ibsen, 1988, pp.222-223)

heroism that so much occupied the minds of the young men of this generation, although it was but one of their concerns[87]. Michael Ransom accepts climbing also to challenge his own brother whom he lionised and whose power he acknowledged, but not without a tinge of rivalry – his brother was in the end a Truly Strong Man. Haunted by the power his mother exerts over him, Michael Ransom wants to use this private act of reaching F6 in order to attain a symbolic public significance which ultimately would bring him the solace, recognition and, subsequently, power, were he successful in his expedition, all of which he is so badly in need. But, even in his hallucination, after having reached the summit, the stifling and domineering image of his mother is what he has to deal with, and it is on her lap, as if he were an infant, that he lays his head for his last breath, thus reinforcing the feeling of a Truly Weak Man. He had failed the Test!

The Ascent of F6 is a modern tragedy filled in with all the ingredients which are timeless, imperialism and the quest for power at a broader level and, at a more restrictive level, the individual's own and eternal search for personal recognition[88]. It must be admitted that the play might have lost most of its impact for dealing with these private inner conflicts so intensely rather than dealing with the mean and ambitious character of the hero and the repercussions the individual behaviour might assume in the society as a whole, especially under the circumstances at the time it was produced. But it is also true that important and pertinent issues were brought forth thus giving rise to rethinking and reshaping certain concepts so very often taken for granted as the case of imperialism. The play holds attention and, in our perspective, the characters are consistently designed and they are quite convincing; the play has rhythm and is lively even if we think the public may at times feel baffled, but at the same time attracted and spellbound. The reportage and fable, as a means of "rhythmic contrast", make their way in the play and add to its interest[89]. The play was first performed by the Group Theatre in the London Mercury Theatre, 1937; and in 1939, it was again performed in London, on the other side of the Thames, for the revival of the Old

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[87] It is not so strange that the chosen Test for both authors was climbing, since, at the epoch it was very much a fashionable activity that, in a way, could and should desirably be a functional substitute for heroism at war. Many of the intellectuals of the time took to mountaineering, as is the case of the teacher, critic and poet Michael Roberts and his wife or Auden's older brother.

[88] It seems the timelessness of the play has been acknowledge throughout time and is worth reviving. The play was recently performed at the Northern Illinois University between February 23rd and 28th, and between March 1st and 4th, 2012 in the College of Visual and Performing Arts School of Theatre and Dance. Also the paper *The Rock River Times – The voice of the community since 1987*, in its March 7th-13th, 2012 issue, published an article, signed by the theatre critic Edith McCauley referring to the play, titled " The Northern Illinois University production of *The Ascent of F6* presents a challenge".

[89] Apropos *F6*, both Forster and Samuel Hynes recall the figure of T.E. Lawrence. E.M. Forster compares M. Ransom to "Colonel Lawrence in temperament", in the already referred article. In *The Auden Generation*, S. Hynes endeavours to make clear how T.E. Lawrence fits into the pattern of the Thirties' in need of an act of heroism that may redeem him from not having been ripe to participate in the 1914-1918 War. So, Lawrence and his deeds raised mixed feelings in such diverse men as the Marxist scholar Ralph Fox, Winston Churchill, Isherwood or Auden. Fox would say of Lawrence "he was the only hero whom the English ruling classes have produced in our time a hero who in his own lifetime gathered about him all the legendary atmosphere of the hero" - quoted from Hynes, 190 - Christopher Isherwood in turn, published his opinion on T. E. Lawrence in the *Listener* 17, 9th June, 1937, which Hynes uses: "Isherwood described Lawrence as a divided man, an adolescent who had never matured and a man who 'suffered, in his own person, the neurotic ills of an entire generation'" (Hynes, 1976: 190,191). T.E. Lawrence was thus not a conventional hero, but the possible hero of his times.

Vic. As a curiosity, Sir Alec Guinness played the role of Michael Ransom.

5.3.3 *On the Frontier*

On the Frontier, published in 1938, a melodrama in three acts, as they called it, and the last of the Auden-Isherwood collaboration is, we think, a less complex and less experimental play, but also a better achieved work and, from a purely scenic point of view, very effective, although not the one that attained the highest success, or was the object of the best reviews. This privilege went to *Ascent of F6*. Our view does run counter the general opinion at the time, coinciding perhaps only with the reviewer of the *Manchester Guardian*, that after the first six performances at Cambridge with which it opened, thought it was "an indisputable success" in which he was followed by the *New Statesman* (Carpenter, 1992, p.246) . But the critics of the *New Verse* were very much in line with Spender and Summers when they commented on Auden and Isherwood not having "exploited a tenth of their ability". Though not impressed, Louis McNeice did not entirely dismiss the work as a bad play and was to find the subject important (Carpenter, 1992, p.246).

The theme of war and the political preferences of the authors are easy to discern, and the lingering atmosphere of that year prior to World War Two is clearly sensed as well as a change in their politics, greatly linked, we believe, to the disappointment they felt after the collapse of their expectations in what concerns an alternative system to rule mankind, as we have already had the opportunity to refer to in this work. *On the Frontier* can be said to be a play about the war and the way the ordinary citizen envisages the *perspective* of war, and ultimately how he undergoes the *reality* of war; war means chaos, the total absence of order, and ultimately the end of Europe, at least as they knew it, the cradle of civilization. War, therefore, meant the destruction of that very civilization.

Two fictional states in Europe, one monarchist, the other fascist, Ostnia and Westland respectively[90], both of them pursuing a policy of war thus deviating the attention of the society from the really only valuable and worth attaining goal – a stage where a happy future and the triumph of love are possible. It is, it may be said, an overt plea for peace, against xenophobia and nationalistic sentiments in a decade identified with a struggle of an international dimension, and values adrift. The work has, nonetheless, several possible readings which have to do with the authors' own disenchantment, and, in a way, with the contradictions of this generation of young men committed to the cause of antifascism, but that has lost ground as far as the alternative perspectives to such evil were concerned.

The play takes place mainly in the Ostnia-Westland room - the stage is thus divided into two, an imaginary line separates both households, the Thorvalds, for Westland, and the Vrodnys, for Ostnia – and the youngsters from both families sense the presence of each other, Eric Thorvald and Anna Vrodny. The whole of the play is focused on the anguishing prospect of a coming war. This feeling was acutely felt by both writers, especially maddening

[90] Here the authors recover the fictional countries from their other play *The Dog Beneath the Skin or Where is Francis?*

in the case of Isherwood, not to forget Germany, where both were to witness the advent of Nazism with all the violence it entailed, and which Isherwood's "camera with its shutter open" so conveniently "recorded"; the Spanish Civil War where Auden had been on the side of the Republic, and of whose ephemeral passage some texts of uncommon quality remain; and the Sino-Japanese war which both writers partly witnessed.

In 1938, when the play first came out, both authors sensed that war would soon be a reality. In *On the Frontier* the two families discuss the on-going arrangements for an armed conflict which will soon break out and both parts try to put the blame on the other, thus rejecting tolerance as a means to prevent confrontation. The young people, the representatives of the future – Eric, a pacifist, and Anna - are the only ones who consider peace and common understanding – although Dr Thorvald, Eric's father and a liberal who remains so throughout, manifests, at some stage, the possibility of being mistaken, since the words 'frontier' and 'country' have lost their sense to an extent that it is difficult to know what they are really fighting for. This idea of "country" and "frontier" had years before much afflicted Isherwood; one has only to consider the interminable and anguishing quest for a place to dwell and the number of countries, Portugal amongst them, he and his companion, Heinz Nyedermeier, took refuge in before Heinz was eventually caught by the Nazis and made a prisoner. Eric and Anna appear as heroes who in the end are not real heroes, but somehow the victims of the current evil. The values that they defend are noble, but the young people lack the strength of true believers – very likely because their creators had lost faith in the political dispensation they had till then supported and had animated their political militancy. They lack the certainty that the current crisis of values will be overcome and a new society will bloom out of the inevitable chaos. The certainty that was to be witnessed in men like John Cornford or Christopher Caudwell, who truly believed that a new model of society would flourish from their struggle is not the mood of the Auden-Isherwood's heroes. Eric and Anna are unhappy creatures. They are aware of what the "good side" is, but quite powerless to change the course of history. Eric, notwithstanding the fact that he is a pacifist, dies fighting in the barricades, Anna dies in a hospital, physically separated from him, but by some kind of common and intense feeling they join together in death, since they have not been able to meet in life. To them belong the final lines of the play as they "meet":

…
Anna. Europe lies in the dark
City and flood and tree;
Thousands have worked and work
To master necessity.

Eric. To build the city where
The will of love is done
And brought to its full flower
The dignity of men.

Anna. Pardon their mistakes,
The impatient and wavering will.
They suffer for our sakes,

Honour, honour them all.

Both. Dry their imperfect dust,
The wind blows it back and forth.
They die to make men just
And worthy of the earth.

(Auden and Isherwood, 1938)

They were ultimately two ordinary young people wanting to live their lives in peace and respect for the others, attached to the traditional liberal values, human dignity, respect, love in a society whose end was only too easy to foresee.

Interesting is also the West lander Valerian, head of the Westland Steel Trust, who, like Krupp[91], or for that matter Schindler[92] in the Second World War, had a lot to achieve were the country to enter a war. He was obviously one of the most enthusiastic supporters of the conflict. He ends up being killed by one of his subordinates, but not for a major cause. A personal conflict is at the root of his killing.

Whatever failures these poetic dramas may present, regardless of the fact that we do agree with most of the acute observations made by his friends, analysts and reviewers, they were, at least, the product of a great endeavour on the part of the two authors to join "the army on the other side", and to put what they knew better - their art - at the service of the fight against the "chaos of values" that Auden recognised and identified in his generation.

The two writers were both ahead of their time, able to read and interpret the signs, and courageous enough to turn their feelings into a public issue. Also the fact that they chose the stage as their option reveals the urgency of the political situation they were undergoing and the necessity to attain the largest public possible. Auden and Isherwood thought it then necessary to use their public self to serve a much nobler purpose, since the two authors were politically involved, and well aware that the infra-structural changes alter men's conscience something had to be done, and rapidly. And, naturally, style proved not to have been their primary concern. According to the two men, literature had a public goal. Both writers were to be more critical in years to come about their achievements as far as

[91] Alfried Krupp was a German industrialist who, during the Second World War, was an important element helping Hitler in the war effort. His factories produced weapons and other war material under appalling conditions for the workers involved. He was Luchino Visconti's model for Baron Joachim Von Essenbeck in *The Damned* (1969). Visconti, when interviewed about the origines of the film, was to answer :"Mon idée était de faire l'histoire d'une famille au sein de laquelle arrivent des crimes qui restent pratiquement impunis" and further "Où et quand, dans l'histoire moderne, cela peut-il arriver? Seulement pendant le nazisme. Il y a alors des massacres, des assassinats, en masse ou individuels, qui restait absolument impunis. Et c'est ansi que j'ai situé l'histoire des industriels d'acier, en Allemagne, pendant la montée du Nazism" (Sanzio and Thirard, 1984, p.109). It is of interest to note that Alfried Krupp, in the aftermath of World War Two was taken to court and convicted for crimes against the humanity and later pardoned; this fact might have been determinant for Visconti to bringing the matter forth and work upon the subject.

[92] Oskar Schindler was also a German industrialist, and like Krupp, very near the Nazi circles, but he happened to have a different attitude from Krupp. While taking advantage of the War as the best way to make quick money, he was also conscious of the atrocities carried out by the Nazis and therefore set himself the task to save as many Jews as he possibly could. Steven Spielberg was to immortalize him and his deeds in *Shindler's List*, a 1993 film.

their joint stage production was concerned. *On the Frontier* managed to have a one night performance in London, at the Globe Theatre, in February 1939, but it failed to interest the West End theatre managers. Isherwood, it seems, took it lightly, it "passed away painlessly" he said, whereas Auden commented years later on the collaboration between the two that "none of them will quite do" (Carpenter, 1992, p.247). Whatever their capabilities were, and we do not question they might certainly have done better "…they were, in their quirky, patchy way, the unsteady beginning of a real revolution in English drama", in the words of Humphrey Carpenter in Auden's biography.

5.4 The Generous Days: Stephen Spender and his role as a kind of 'historian' of the group

Before going deep into the analysis of Spender's play, it is worth delving into what were his numerous attempts to situate himself on "the right side" of the political scene, and his endeavour to try and rationalize what were his natural preferences and act accordingly. With hindsight, one of the things that preoccupied him most through his life, at the intellectual level, was certainly to try and bring forth some kind of valuable contribution to the understanding of the historical moment of which he happened to be a witness, with particular emphasis on the decades that mediated the two World wars – the 1920s, 1930s, and also the 1940s.

For family reasons, Stephen Spender spent some years of his early youth in the Lake District, and it came as natural that his father read to him some of Wordsworth's poems - *We are Seven,* amongst others of the Romantic poet's childhood poems. It was there that he first thought of poetry as part of his life, but it was also there that he learnt that, even though in terms of politics - his parents cherished liberal ideas - this did not make it any easier for the young Spender to mix with the children of more underprivileged layers. In an autobiographical poem which dates back to the reality when he stayed in Wordsworth's district, one can safely infer that he might have liked a different kind of approach with the boys of his age. Imperatives of class kept him away from them. He did state that - an almost poignant testimony - in his poem *My parents kept me from children who were rough,* which reads as follows:

> My parents kept me from children who were rough
> And who threw words like stones and wore torn clothes
> Their thighs shown through rags. They run in the street
> And climbed cliffs and stripped by the country streams
>
> I feared more than tigers their muscles like iron
> And their jerking hands and their knees tight on my arms
> I feared the salt coarse pointing of those boys
> Who copied my lisp behind me on the road.
>
> They were lithe they sprang out behind hedges
> Like dogs to bark at my world. They threw mud
> While I looked another way, pretending to smile.
> I longed to forgive them but they never smiled.

(Spender, written 1932)

Judging from this poem, he resented having been submitted to such "probation", as it were, that kept him away from the "other world", turning it into a kind of complex that might have been, in a child's fashion, as much of inferiority as of superiority. This might have given him ground for reflection. It is thus safe to say that his social and class preoccupations started then. In the early 1920s, still a school boy at the University College School he took an interest in politics and was a member of the Debating Society and the League of Nations Union (Leeming, 1999). He was an indefatigable reader, university and the friends he was to share his time with did the rest. He entered Oxford University in 1927 when Auden was in his final year and was to be without doubt his major influence as far as literary matters were concerned. They were to remain friends for the rest of their lives. The University, not only for Spender, but for many young men of his generation was an important starting point to their development in human as well as political terms and subsequent involvement in politics. This interest in politics he was to pursue until his death in 1992.

We have already identified several factors which were at the origin of the "political turning point" for the European intelligentsia. The Spanish Civil War and Hitler's victory in Germany awakened the consciousness of the Europeans to what seemed, up to then, to be circumscribed and local occurrences, of a more national scope, into something of a more generalised character, of a European, if not of a world dimension, that made the young Spender, by this time in his early twenties and already a sharp observer of the political and social environment, to join the struggle on "the right side", so he was convinced, to prevent authoritarian regimes from flourishing.

Spender, in his autobiography of the 1930's, sketches the reasons why there should be "a connection between politics and literature". It is known of Spender that that connection should not only exist but that it was both necessary and desirable under the circumstances, since one way or another everyone was involved and politics became, so to speak, a kind of literary asset. It is as if the poet, the writer had the historical obligation to contribute to the understanding of what was felt as an apocalyptic epoch, to leave a testimony for future generations. Whatever they were to leave would manifestly be the way they envisaged the place and time they were in as well as their "ethical orientation", for the generations to come would be left the task to interpret, and judge according to their own reading and the eyes of their own time. It would be worthwhile to reflect upon Spender's feelings about it:

> "One subject constantly discussed at all these writers' meetings was whether there was a necessary connection between politics and literature. I myself believed that within modern conditions there is such a connection: that is to say, that sensitive minds must be conscious, in one way or another, of the general political fate in which almost everyone today is involved. I used the word 'political' in a very wide sense, to cover a fatality which I felt to be overtaking our civilization and which influenced our modern writing more explicitly than was generally realized… a kind of literary material which our predecessors had not thought of as political had obvious political implications for us today….The peculiarity of the 1930's was not that the subject of a civilization in decline was new, but that the hope of saving or transforming it had

> arisen, combined with the positive necessity of withstanding tyrannies." (Spender, 1951, p.249)

Spender's outlook on the matter of politics, and how politics cuts across all kinds of writing, is very much in tune with the Cultural Materialists who, themselves, would not conceive any piece of writing where politics were not to be present, or could not be perceived; or to put this in another way, where a political reading could not be inferred. Unlike other writers, Spender's political bend was always consciously prevalent, he could sense, for example, in "Henry James's novels a sense of the social decay of Europe" (Spender, 1951, p.249), and, as he himself realises, influenced modern writing to a considerable extent and, in our view, might have ploughed the path for a more outspoken manner to present the political predicament, to criticise as well as posing alternatives, as Spender did when the hopes of radical change of the current political system were still blooming, as is the case of his *Forward from Liberalism*, in 1937. It is the young Spender's political statement; it was what at that moment of heavy social unrest he believed in. In his work he admits that liberalism is but an embellished cover for the capitalist system and that the next step, the alternative to the present evil – the war – is Socialism, while still defending that it should be developed within certain democratic boundaries. Some thirteen years after the public expression of his hopes, he was publishing, in 1950, together with another four fellow writers and *compagnons de route*, *The God That Failed* which was the public manifestation of his and their disbelief and disillusionment!

Sometime after the release of *Forward from Liberalism*, Harry Pollit, the then secretary general of the Communist Party of Great Britain, was to respond to Spender's challenging proposal in an article published in the *New Masses* entitled *Stephen Spender and Liberalism* (Pollit, 1937). Pollit disagreed apropos various issues, namely in what concerns Spender's critique vis-à-vis the Soviet Union – Pollit, in spite of the evidence about brutality of the Soviet regime, remained till the end faithful to it and to its dictator - but believed that Spender, albeit belonging to "one of the oldest liberal families in England" had found his way and "It is therefore interesting to see how a young Spender attempts to shake off the shackles of the past, and tries in this epoch of capitalist decline and imperialist wars and proletarian revolutions to find his way to Communism" (1937, p.22). It was on these grounds that Pollit invited Spender, in the same year to join the Communist Party, which he did, but, apparently, for very little time. Cecil Day-Lewis as well as Edward Upward were also to join the Party; the former having left it rather early, while the latter having remained faithful to it most of his life.

The preoccupation of the young Spender then was to try and stand on the "good side" of the barricade, as opposed to the "bad side", with the genuine and generous feelings that being there necessarily entailed. It happened to Spender, the same way it happened to Auden, Isherwood, Lehmann, Upward and Day-Lewis – as seen before, or others. Auden was to confess to Spender at the end of the war that he "was political in the 1930's just because something could and should be done" (Spender, 1951, p.250). The year 1938, in historical

terms, was a terrible year. It was the year, also in March, of the Anschluss, which dictated the annexation of Austria to the Third Reich, and it was also later in the year, September 29th, that the Munich Agreement was signed having as its protagonists Germany, Italy, The United Kingdom and France, which decided the future of the Sudetenland, in Czechoslovakia, in Hitler's favour. All this touched the boundaries of madness as far as men of good will and sense were concerned. It was not only the "decay of Europe" and its liberal values which was at stake, but Europe's very destruction, as Forster so clearly put it. Spender had been to Austria in 1934 where he witnessed the Vienna Uprising. He had made friends there, fallen in love, and in a way got emotionally involved in what the fate of the socialist movement in that country was to become. His *Vienna* is the poetic outcome of that 1934 visit: a kind of a "filial homage to *The Waste Land*" (Sutherland, 2004, p.172), in the words of Spender's biographer John Sutherland. The poem is divided into four sections and all have to do with Spender's own experience there from the moment of arrival where life and death are paralleled, which constitutes the first section, followed by a second section where he contemptuously reviews the political leadership of the country, while in the next section he recalls the fallen of the February disturbances with heartfelt sympathy. The fourth and last section is of a more personal tone, revealing, so to speak, his most inner conflicting troubles.

It was thus that in this atmosphere of international unrest and also personal concern vis-à-vis the fate of Europe that first *Trial of a Judge* (and later Auden-Icherwood's *On the Frontier)* came out. As for the actual source of the story in *Trial of a Judge*, Samuel Hynes refers to an event that took place in Germany, the year prior to Hitler's coming to power, when a group of Nazi fanatics murdered a Polish Jew in the Silesian region, and got away with their crime when their party interfered with the trial and subsequently with the court decision (Hynes, 1977). The young Spender thought it important to bring the matter forth, as almost a warning, in the hope, since Nazism had not yet spread, that some kind of consciousness could stop the course of events.

Stephen Spender's *Trial of a Judge*, like Auden-Isherwood's *On the Frontier*, appeared in 1938, and like the latter was also written for The Group Theatre, of which he was one of the six directors, along with its gifted producer Rupert Doone (Spender 1991, 249). *Trial of a Judge* appeared in the first place, in March. Here again the theme and the momentum are not dissociated from history.

5.4.1 *Trial of a Judge* - A tragedy in five acts

Spender's Judge is a good man, respectful of the principles of absolute and abstract justice and the rule of law. He is politically a liberal and so are the principles he stands for. On the contrary, his wife is a fascist, moved by feelings of hatred and vengeance. The same applies to his close friend, the politician Hummeldorf. At some stage in the play the Judge rules and decides for the maxim punishment of five fascists tried for the murder of Petra, a Jew and a political activist too, and of three communists on the grounds of aggression to a policeman. According to his judgement, the applied law seems not to be quite fair in such

cases as these, out of proportion, in the case of the latter, at least. But he is later to change his verdict responding to the overpowering persuasion of his own wife and friend, and the fascists are spared, but not the communists. As the play unfolds he is also to regret that he had ruled so. He is subsequently removed from his post as a judge by his friend Hummeldorf, the fascists gain ground and execute the Judge and his friend as well.

On the stage, two groups of people stand for both fascism – the Black Chorus – and communism – the Red Chorus, and it seems that events develop according to an external fight – the Judge is powerless in his own court, his judgement, had he decided otherwise, would have amounted to the same result, he is thus stripped of his power, his liberal principles count nothing, and the struggle is between the two driving forces of the time – mainly in Germany with the recent events – the fascists and the communists. The power of the struggle seems to go beyond people, beyond the common feelings or principles, two realms are at stake here. Hence, the Judge ends up executed while the communists remain imprisoned and the fascists manage to seize power and dictate the rules.

In 1938, neither Spender nor Auden or Isherwood believed in communism any longer, although they tried, but probably not as hard as they should have liked – to convince an audience that communism is in fact the "other side", the "good side" to be on, since the attack came precisely from the fascist side[93]. The Judge, with his faith in the liberal values is to the audience a sympathetic figure. In his The *Thirties and After*, Stephen Spender does quote in full a passage of Louis McNeice's *The Strings are False*, where he gives an account of a public debate organised by the Group Theatre to discuss *Trial of a Judge*. Our view of the Judge is in no way very different from McNeice's; here is how he expressed it:

> "The intended moral of the play was that liberalism today was weak and wrong, communism was strong and right, but this moral was sabotaged by Spender's unconscious integrity; the liberal Judge, his example of what-not-to-be, walked away with one's sympathy." (McNeice cited in Spender, 1978, p.32)

At this point we allow ourselves to quote from Samuel Hynes's *The Auden Generation* the words of Goronwy Rees, since we find that his thought accurately expresses something we tend to agree with. Rees asserts that "his [Spender's] play is an exploration of the mental tortures of a class in decline…" (Hynes, 1977, p.305). It seems that Spender's misgivings were, in the end, the misgivings of this whole generation of young writers, who were forced to search a sense for living in the respect for those liberal values they at first found obsolete.

Towards the end of the play, in the last act, the leader of the fascists speaks, and what he says makes one shiver, since words, ideas, and ideals mean nothing under the circumstances and only the force, a "tide" as he names it, will sweep old traditional values. It was, as it were, a supra human detached force, void of any kind of human control. How accurately Spender foresaw the coming years, and how desperately he ultimately wanted the

[93] Surely Stalin benefitted from this entire situation, since the immediate fight was against fascism, thus justifying the silence about the atrocities of the Soviet rule, as explained before.

traditional liberal values to prevail – rule of law, justice, love, respect… Spender, although not very convincingly – and it is here, perhaps, that McNeice speaks of Spender's "unconscious integrity", allows the Red Chorus to speak the last lines of his play "We shall be free, we shall find peace", which so reminiscently echoes one of Chekov's last lines of *Uncle Vanya*, when, after severe unrest and upsetting events to the daily routine of the house, Sonya sadly asserts to her uncle "Our life will be as peaceful and gentle and sweet as a caress. I have faith, I have faith…. But wait, Uncle Vanya, wait …We shall rest, we shall rest" (Chekhov, 1986, p.245).

Spender's "freedom", or for that matter Chekhov's "rest", was to come to battered Europe – at least to most of Western European countries, since Spain and Portugal were to remain under the grip of fierce authoritarian regimes - yet after another bloody conflict that lasted for almost six years, and it was from the debris and shards of such evil that Europe had to be reinvented, the communist alternative definitely cast aside and liberal values retrieved. Ultimately, the liberal values all along defended by E. M. Forster from which the younger writers seemed, at least for a time, to have gained a certain distance. The publication and staging of such plays was, as it were, the writers' response found to deal with the coming catastrophe. It seems that all three writers suffered, in that unfortunate year of 1938, of a certain hopelessness, which they passed on to their "heroes", either Anna or Eric, in the Auden-Isherwood's work, or Spender's Judge. They may be Truly Strong Men since they stood for their principles, but probably not thoroughly. They are not and cannot be complete heroes for their creators did not allow them the privilege to accomplish anything – the Auden-Isherwood's heroes both die on the process, and Spender's Judge is executed while the Red Chorus, as the representatives of the "good side", remain imprisoned at the mercy of the fascists, almost as a kind of premonition of what the forthcoming times were going to be like.

So was the mood of a whole generation mirrored in these plays; no one was to escape such evil which made a victim of every living soul, as once expressed by Spender.

"… AND WHO CAN HOPE FOR MORE?":

A SORT OF CONCLUSION

There we shall be safe" they thought.
They were never to be that.
But they were together for the moment;
They had stayed disintegration and combined daily
Work with love;
And who can hope for more?

Forster, 1913-14

After having "travelled" mainly across the 20's, the 30's and the 40's decades of the last century, some conclusions must be drawn towards a sound reflection about the means and causes by which we arrived at the stage we find ourselves in already fourteen years passed since the turn of the century. This reflection must necessarily include the struggle, the actions and deeds of the protagonists we have been dealing with and how fundamental a role they all played. One way or another, they all tried hard in their own fashion, with their own fears and misgivings to honestly and heartedly give their contribution towards the change of a world on the fringes of self-destruction. Their relentlessness helped to push the world forward at a time when acting involved serious risks which nonetheless did not hinder them from doing what they judged in their consciousness most essential to lead them on the path to a more reasonable, a more acceptable, and a more just way of dwelling in a world, more particularly, in a Europe which was theirs, and of which we have been the natural inheritors, and which now belong to us all the same way it belonged to them. The Europe they had in mind was certainly a Europe of peace in the first place, but also of solidarity, of cooperation, of respect, free from discrimination of any kind, and of equality amongst its peoples. They most surely were the first inspirers of a united Europe, even if this idea was not explicitly put this way but which their actions accounted for – their literary production is the visible proof of their universality – from Forster's *A Passage to India*, questioning British imperialism and thus putting it on the agenda, so reminding that the British were not alone in matters of colonialism, to Auden's *Spain* or Spender's *Vienna*.

Across these tumultuous decades, the writers undertook painstaking and persevering efforts to counteract what were the negative tendencies of their historical time, from E. M. Forster who so cogently expressed his own views on the failure to seize the momentum of the Spanish War or on the most compelling necessity of cooperation with the Germans after the Second World War in the sense that the world, and Europe, in particular, could not live in peace without having overcome the wounds left by the atrocities committed in war time. According to him, only a tremendous amount of tolerance, good-sense, good-will and desire to restore peace could heal those wounds to the younger writers of the following generation(s) that committed themselves to a struggle of, we believe, universal scope. Although their methods and ways were diverse, the goal to be attained was similar.

Throughout this research work we endeavoured to make and suggest, as much as we felt competent to, alternative readings of the works of the writers we proposed to study without, nonetheless, lose sight of the historical context and historical events which gave rise to their artistic production, together with the political commitment, and especially in critical moments, their politics of dissent, which necessarily, decidedly and unquestionably run counter the established patterns. We also focused our attention on their capabilities to fight dominance - and here we are particularly referring to the Thirties' generation which so hard tried to establish itself as an oppositional as well as purposeful segment of the society - which presided over the writers' choices and options towards the transformation of the *status quo* which discriminates people on the grounds of class, nation, religious beliefs, gender and

others, and inflicts to them unnecessary ordeals and consequent sufferings, always bearing in mind that the improvement of human conditions in the society decidedly depends upon the human effort.

The literary texts should, according to our perspective, be analysed in the light of history and taking into consideration their relation to the institutions whose duty is to deal with the cultural production in the sense that they are responsible for their making as well as their reproduction and ultimately their distribution and dissemination. Particular attention was paid to the relations between the dominant powers established and the subordinate actors, and the margin sought and found by the latter to make their way through the established system, which, on its turn, either accommodates or rejects dissidence which may appear under the most various forms. In the case of E. M. Forster, for example, we may point out as particularly relevant his collaboration with the BBC throughout more than three decades, as seen before, in which the writer tried to take advantage of the breach opened to him by the institutions and, for that matter, by the system, and used it in a way to approach art and literature in terms which were far from being neutral, innocent, let alone spontaneous. Forster did, especially in war time, take full profit of the opportunity granted to him and was able to find strategies to reach the goals he had set for himself. Hence, the importance of analysing his texts with minute attention is paramount; always keeping in mind the historical moment of their broadcasting as we tried to do when dealing, precisely, with some of those writings, and the pertinence of the writer's choices and his line of intervention. Both the very private spheres of life and the simple private feelings of the old writer contributed to the fact that any attempt to the creation of art was surely permeable to the generalized mood of public tragedy he happened to be undergoing at a certain period of his existence, and this is clearly visible in his artistic production. So, the historical, social and cultural environment in which the work of art is produced was for us a matter of paramount importance when toiling with the works and writers of our choice.

At stake is this "negotiation" between the artist and the system, and the ways – sometimes alternative – the former finds to make his or her work circulate depending on various factors such as its contents, its subversive potential and its urgency. It is interesting to notice how in times of crisis some of the writers we approached chose to produce plays rather than novels, and found all sorts of alternative ways to stage them – it was so with Isherwood and Auden, the same way it was with Spender or even with Ackerley, sometime their predecessor. The social *milieu* certainly shared the same concerns being, therefore, more permeable as to the message the writers tried to convey. So again, as we have been sustaining in the course of our work, and in a fashion that we owe as much to the Cultural Materialists as to the New Historicists, we do not by any means dissociate literature from its historical context within the logic of "text context" as the American scholar Catherine Gallagher would put it.

It seems Forster found the possibilities of dissidence, or for that matter its limits, before the young writers of the thirties, whether we deal with the ones who perished in the

course of their militancy or the ones who survived and had to be faced with the conflicts, incongruences and contradictions inevitably arisen from the social order within itself.

Art, in a general way, can be, and, in our perspective, should be disturbing and disrupting and while being so it will be fulfilling one of its noblest functions. These writers kept on trying, but alas, they all seemed entrapped by the historical process which eventually dictated, in most cases, the end, or simply a diversion, of their militancy. And it might be here that one can easily understand the proximity of the younger generations to E.M. Forster, from the Englishmen of the thirties' to younger generations of non-Europeans, as the case of the Indian writer and politician K. Natwar-Singh or the Jordan academic Mohammad Shaheen, a Cambridge undergraduate at King's College at Forster's death. Everything might have originated in his own humanism, his faith in the human kind and personal relations, his loyalty, his tolerance, his warm heart, his endless and indefectible disposition towards his friends and fellowmen, but also, and strangely enough, his political beliefs.

For Forster, the dramatic predicament in which liberalism fell was for him the tragedy of his time. The moral values and principles of liberalism lost significance, they became irrelevant. And here he is not so distant from the young Spender, as we had the opportunity to refer apropos his *Trial of a Judge*, or from Auden or Isherwood if we are to judge from their last collaboration. If liberalism had once been considered a past issue for the Left that so fiercely fought for a new dispensation which foresaw communism as the future organisation for mankind, or for a more extreme Right that, on its part, also advocated a new social order, fascism or, for that matter, Nazism, where there would be no room to accommodate the traditional liberal values such as rule of law, respect or justice. In both cases the result proved to have been disastrous for the defenceless underprivileged classes, as contended in the course of our work. It is before this state of affairs that E. M. Forster stands as a moralising "hero" for the young writers of the thirties', and if he was a father figure for that generation of young men, and respected and esteemed by them all, for the reasons stated above, the more so at a moment when all the hopes seemed to have been lost. With an impending war coming closer, the younger writers were only too eager to retrieve the old traditional values of liberalism, the same values the older writer defended all the way through, no matter whether it was before his fellow writers of the Paris Congress, in 1935, or in his subsequent writings and broadcasts in the hard times the world conflict was to last. A figure and an example the young writers of the thirties' never lost sight of and always sought for comfort or for the sheer pleasure of sharing his company or listening to his *sage* opinion when all the political and human values seemed to undergo severe crisis. His was an example that helped them shape and mould the contours of their own art.

We cannot resist to refer to Toynbee's belief that there was "something heroic in the idea of confronting and recognising limitations, and in uttering beliefs in the face of hostile, powerful opponents: in a time of crisis, the hero may be simply the man who testifies, this man was E.M. Forster" (Toynbee cited in Hynes, 1977, p.302). In their own way they all tried hard to testify, even Isherwood's "camera with its shutter open, quite passive, recording, not

thinking." (Isherwood, 1998, p.9) brought to us an inestimable contribution to the understanding of pre-war Berlin, stage of the most virulent confrontations between strong opposing forces that ignored the means to achieve their objectives.

Belonging to a generation that grew up under the grip of the Victorian authorities, with all their constraining and restrictive manners, Morgan Forster produced most of his literary outcome in Edwardian times. He underwent a World War where he was active playing a part and satisfying both the established power as well as the public opinion. It seems thus all too natural that he sought some kind of comfort with writers and intellectuals of his own generation that, one way or other, had found some form of equilibrium in a certain manner of dissidence which, while consensual with certain established patterns[94], had practiced a line of dissidence and rebellion which secured them a place in the British history as dissidents and beacon of change and hope - the men and women that belonged to the so-called Bloomsbury Group. Their dissident potential was inexhaustible, and from it, outstanding figures of the British letters, arts and politics emerged – Leonard Woolf, Virginia Woolf, E .M. Forster, Litton Strachey, Vanessa Bell, Roger Fry, Duncan Grant or John Maynard Keynes, the latter having effective and decisively contributed to the change of an economic model which was exhausted and which did not serve the frail and battered countries in the aftermath of World War Two, and of which he was not only the creator but its driving force. He was the man of the redistribution of the available wealth who put his knowledge at the service of helping the peoples to regain their dignity. History remembers him as having helped to restore the economies of those countries and, notwithstanding the fact that they still moved within a capitalist mode of production, it was possible to find ways to satisfy the populations and bring them, at least, a sense of recognition and dignity after the war, together with better and more stable material conditions. Hunger marches and violent repression of workers seemed to have still been present in his mind.

Although this proximity with the Bloomsbury surroundings was vital to Forster, there were also the young writers of the thirties', politically committed, assertive in the way they expressed their own convictions in their work, be it in the realm of pure politics or in their literary and artistic creations, in the way they manifested their sexual preferences and in whose entourage he felt comfortable and at ease. They would be there for him when he felt more vulnerable and expressed outpourings of heartfelt suffering and feelings of eminent or tangible catastrophe, as Forster expressed in a letter to Isherwood: "The night as I write is full of booming bombers. I wish I was out of it all. Not [in] another part of the world, which would not suit me, but dead. I am sure there is hope, but want someone else to do the hoping" (Zeikowitz, 2008, p.94). Isherwood would be ready and eager to support his older friend. It is also worth remembering that E.M. Forster was never to leave England throughout the duration of the Second World War.

[94] We may refer to Virginia Woolf as an illustrative example, as we have had the opportunity to refer to in our work when discussing the legitimacy of the poets and poetry to mingle with politics.

A Passage to India had been published in 1924 and put on the public agenda the question of imperialism and colonialism. At the time, not only Britain, but most of the European powers possessed colonies, and those which did not, or for that matter did not have enough, in their view, as was the case of Italy and the invasion of Abyssinia, which took the Emperor Haile Selassie to the League of Nations to claim justice for his people, or Germany with her Northern Africa campaigns. But it was indeed the Civil War in Spain, from which the country took ages to recover and probably will never be able to thoroughly do so, that definitely changed the nature of the struggle. It was, alas, the fight for Europe! Successive generations of men and women in Europe were wasted in the first half of the twentieth century, from the First World War, having gone through the Spanish Civil War to eventually end up in the Second World War whose balance in terms of deaths was appalling, and whose effects can still be felt nowadays. Here let us just lean over the question of Greece and her people[95]. It is relevant at this point to note that we witness throughout History that there are trends of external policy which extend over time, keeping the same logic even without firing a shot in the literal sense, resorting to different mechanisms (of market for example), but whose principles remain unchanged, as we have recently been witnessing in the case of Germany vis-à-vis Greece, Ireland or Portugal, or still the case of the British reluctance to fully commit itself to the construction of any kind of political unity in Europe, since the rulers feel it as a potential danger for their particular interests, in overt conflict with the desires and longings of the authors we have been concerned about.

Spain, thus, was the call for a change in European current arrangements! Spain was to be, in the minds of the generous and voluntarist young intellectuals, writers, artists and working people the foundations of a new Europe. A Europe they wanted to be of peace, of solidarity, of freedom of speech and movement, and of culture. It was so that Britain alone supplied the International Brigade involved in the fight for the defence of the Republic with circa three thousand volunteers. At the time no one would dream of a defeat that would certainly bring disillusionment, disenchantment, discouragement and bitterness. It is no coincidence that Trevor Tolley named Spain the "cemetery of the British left". The assertion was not only tragic but thoroughly accurate, and not only was its meaning literal as it was metaphorical. It is precisely with the bitter taste of defeat, of lost illusions in a Europe of culture and solidarity that these young men who survived this first ordeal would have to undergo a second one of devastating consequences that reached across all segments of the society.

News from the Soviet Union, in which they truly had believed, added to the array of disenchantments, let alone the tragedy of France and the French people betrayed by their own government - which so much had impressed and grieved the older writer, and made him, in so many occasions call attention to - and redeemed only by the strong and heroic

[95] The German dissident and film director Peter Nestler (b.1937), in his 1965 documentary *Von Griechenland*, gives us an accurate portrait of Greece's predicament in post-war times, which is fertile ground for reflection about what happened then and what is happening now.

"Résistence" which alone faced the German occupier towards the restoration of their sovereignty and dignity as a people.

The carnage carried out throughout the whole of Stalin's rule until his death in 1953, where many of the Russian freedom fighters in Spain were subsequently executed, was appalling and unthinkable for any individual possessing a minimum sense of justice. Some were later to be rehabilitated and freed from jail, those still alive at Stalin's death. Some of those Brigade volunteers from the Eastern European countries came to have important positions in the government or institutions of their own countries, as the case of Enver Hodja, President of Albania, Damianov, vice-president of Bulgaria, Josef Pavel was to become Dubcek's minister of the Interior. A word should also be left to remember the unfortunate but courageous minister of defence of Hungary in the year of the Hungarian revolt, 1956, who was subsequently executed at Khrushchev's orders. Many of the French Brigade volunteers were later to be welcomed into the French "Résistence", where many also died (Thomas, 1977). The disruption of the times prior to and of World War Two did not, however, stop with the end of the war. Many of the American volunteers in Spain who fought within the ranks of the International Brigade also took part in the world conflict only to face McCarthyism at home that regarded with suspicion those who had been involved in the fight for the defence of the Spanish Republic. The process went on through the 60's decade.

If for E.M. Forster the tragedy of his time was the predicament in which liberalism fell, which of course entailed a dramatic loss of values, such as justice, respect or freedom of speech and movement, the younger writers experienced the fall of their hopes regarding the change of the system into something that, according to them and not dispossessed of a tinge of utopia, would necessarily find ways and means to give the people the right material conditions so that their life could be eased in such a way to make them happy.

In spite of all setbacks, we all know that the dominant culture can by no means totally hinder the human practices or completely exhaust men's energy or their claims, and although ideological constraints or ideological discourses are a reality, and one lets himself be deceived, we always have the writers and the artists to remind us that dissidence as a form to fight alienation is possible. Thus, the official discourse *can* be put in question. Alternative readings of the historical context, which the individual is inserted in, are not only feasible as they are desirable and necessary, so that ways to find better and more convenient and appropriate arrangements will surely be possible. Hence, to achieve political, social or cultural transformations depends upon how and on which ground the battle is fought and the power relations are challenged – the forces in the field here are the established power and those who live under it. Literature is then one of the multifarious possibilities to implement that struggle. We had, in the course of our work, the opportunity to bring to light the ways Forster, Isherwood, Auden, Spender, or for that matter those who, for constraints of time and space we could not work upon in more detail, added their voices against fascism and social injustice, chose to act in a time particularly difficult for mankind, were able in their own

manner to find, while actors, their way through and ultimately be consequent with their action to serve interests different from those of the dominant class.

Culture is not a turnkey concept, it is something that is continually in progress, as Sinfeld would say, and to challenge the *status quo* will necessarily lead, sooner or later, to changes in the society. The "neutrality" and "innocence" of the writer, and for that matter any artist, are things in which we do not believe, and, in our perspective, do not exist. These days, when the European project is in jeopardy, when the solidarity once thought and implemented in this continent of ours is losing ground every day, when the precariousness of political, social and economic balances is a reality, the writers and the artists choose, and it is their role, as much as it is ours in our own fields of action, to try and work towards a more just and fair society, where the wealth, the access to the means for the betterment of the individual, and culture are more balanced and more fairly and evenly distributed, while defending, as Julian Benda said in 1928 "eternal and disinterested values, like justice and reason"[96].

It is our conviction that the protagonists of our work, and Forster not less than others apparently more politically engaged, would be saddened by Europe's current predicament. *This* is not *the* Europe they so fiercely fought for and believed in; *this* is not the Europe they wanted and they dreamt of. It thus makes sense, at this particular moment in history when Europe and the World at large, once again, undergo a severe crisis of values not of a lesser importance than that of the thirties', that one fights for better and fairer political and social arrangements for the living generations and the ones to come…. For all that has been said, *We* are entitled "to hope for more"… for *us* and for the future generations…

[96] Julian Benda's essay *The Treason of the Intellectuals*, 1928.

CHRONOLOGICAL NOTES

Dates	Biographical Events	Literary Events	Cultural, Historical and Political Events
1879	Forster's birth at Dorset Square, London		
1881		Publication of Henry James's *Portrait of a Lady*	
1882	Virginia Woolf's birth Forster moves to Rooksnest (original home of *Howards End*)		
1884			Fabian Society founded
1885	D.H. Lawrence's birth		
1886		Publication of Thomas Hardy's *The Mayor of Casterbridge*	
1888			Suez Canal opens to ships of all nations
1890	Forster attends Prep. School – Eastbourne		
1891		Publication of Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Ubervilles*	
1892	Walt Whitman's death		
1893	Forster attends Tonbridge School (Sawston School in *The Longest journey*)		
1895		Publication of Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*	
1896	Joe Ackerley's birth		
1897	Forster enters Cambridge University – King's College (Classics and History)	Publication of Josef Conrad's *The Nigger of the Narcissus*	
1900	Oscar Wilde's death in Paris	Publication of Josef Conrad's *Lord Jim*	Foundation of the Labour Party (in Britain)

1901	Forster is accepted in the *Converzation Society* (*The Apostles*)		Death of Queen Victoria
1902	Forster joins the 'Working Men's College" in London as a teacher of Latin		
1903	Birth of Edward Upward		
1904	Christopher Isherwood's and Cecil Day-Lewis's birth Forster begins his contribution to the *Independent Review*/lectures Italian History and Art for the Cambridge Local Lectures Board	Publication of Josef Conrad's *Nostromo*	
1905	Forster goes to Nassenheide – Germany as a tutor	Publication of Forster's *Where Angels Fear to Tread*	
1906	Henrik Ibsen's death Forster is back in England, meets Syed Ross Masood and starts tutoring (Latin)		
1907	W.H. Auden's birth	Publication of Forster's *The Longest Journey*	
1908	Julian Bell's birth	Publication of Forster's *A Room with a View*	
1909	Stephen Spender's birth		
1910		Publication of Forster's *Howards End*	Political unrest in Britain: miners' strike, suffragette agitation, campaign for Irish Home Rule
1911	Leo Tolstoy's death	Publication of Forster's *The Celestial Omnibus*	
1912	Forster's 1st visit to India where he stays with Ross Masood and starts *A Passage to India*		

1913	Kenneth Sinclair-Louti's birth Forster visits Edward Carpenter and George Merril and begins *Maurice*	Publication of D.H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers* Marcel Proust's Voll *À La Racherche du Temps Perdu*	
1914			Beginning of the First World War
1915	Rupert Brooke dies in the War Forster leaves to Egypt – Alexandria to serve in the Red Cross and meets C.P. Cavafy	Publication of D.H. Lawrence's *The Rainbow*	
1916			Roger Casement's execution
1917			October revolution in Russia
1918		Publication of Lytton Strachey's *Eminent Victorians*	Armistice (end of WWI) Spartacus Uprising in Berlin
1919	Forster is back in England		Foundation of the League of Nations (founded as a result of the Paris Peace Conference) J. Maynard Keynes publishes *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* Assassination of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg by the Freikorps in Berlin
1920		Publication of D.H. Lawrence's *Women in Love*	
1921	Forster visits India for the second time – post as private secretary to the Maharajah of Dewas Senior		

1922		Publication of T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* Forster's *Alexandria: A History and a Guide*	Foundation of the BBC Foundation of literary magazine *Criterion* (T.S. Eliot)
1923		Publication of Forster's *Pharos and Pharillon* (essays written in Egypt)	
1924	Lenin's death	Publication of Forster's *A Passage to India*	
1925	Forster moves to Abinger Hammer with mother	Publication of Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*	Beginning of Mussolini's Fascism in Italy Ackerley's *The Prisoners of War* staged in London for the first time
1926		Publication of T.E. Lawrence's *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*	General Strike in the UK
1927	Forster's Clark Lessons(Cambridge University) – *Aspects of the Novel* published	Publication of Virginia Woolf's *To the Light House*	
1928	Thomas Hardy's death	Publication of D.H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* Christopher Isherwood's *All the Conspirators* Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* Forster's *The Eternal Moment*	

1929	Edward Carpenter's death Forster meets Bob Buckingham Isherwood goes to Berlin for the 1st time to visit Auden	Publication of V. Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* and Cecil Day-Lewis's *Transitional Poem*	Leon Trotsky is deported from the Soviet Union
1930	D.H. Lawrence's death	Publication of Auden's *Poems*	
1931		Publication of Virginia Woolf's *The Waves*	
1932	Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson 's death	Publication of Virginia Woolf's *Letter to a Young Poet* Isherwood's *The Memorial*	Rupert Doone and Robert Medley founded the "Group Theatre" (London)
1933	C.P. Cavafy's death Isherwood starts collaboration with the Austrian film director Berthold Viertel – starts working on the screen play *Little Friend* /		Hitler becomes Chancellor of Germany
1934	Roger Fry's death Forster becomes president of the National Council for Civil liberties *Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson*	Stephen Spender's poem *Vienna* was published by Faber and Faber Publication of Forster's *Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson*	Vienna's February Uprising
1935	Magnus Hirshfeld's death Joe Ackerley was appointed literary editor of *The Listener*, the literary Magazine of the BBC Auden marries Erika Mann	Publication of Isherwood's *Mr Norris Changes Trains* and Auden-Isherwood's *The Dog Beneath the Skin*	First Writers' International Congress in Defence of Culture (Paris) Auden-Isherwood's *The Dog Beneath the Skin* staged for the first time in Britain by the Group Theatre Italian invasion of Abyssinia

1936	Death of Ralph Fox and John Cornford	Publication of André Gide's *Retour de l'URSS* Auden-Isherwood's *The Ascent of F6* Stephen Spender's *The Burning Cactus* Forster's *Abinger Harvest*	Beginning of the Spanish Civil War Start of the "Moscow Trials" The Jarrow March (October), in Britain, with thousands of participants
1937	Death of Julian Bell, Christopher Caudwell and Charlie Donnelly, all of them while fighting in the Spanish Civil War Stephen Spender joins the Communist Party of Great Britain Roger Martin du Gard's is awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature	Publication of Auden's poem *Spain* Stephen Spender's *Forward from Liberalism*	Bombing of Guernica by Germans and Italians Second International Writers' Congress in Defence of Culture (Valencia, Madrid and Paris) The Dewey Commission, or Commission of Enquiry into the Charges made against Leon Trotsky in the Moscow Trials is set up Paris World Exhibition where Picasso's *Guernica* is the centre piece of the Spanish Pavilion
1938	Auden-Isherwood joint trip to China	Publication of Auden - Isherwood's play *On the Frontier* Isherwood's *Lions and shadows* Stephen Spender's *Trial of a Judge* Edward Upward's *Journey to the Frontier*	Hitler's *Anschluss* with Austria (March) Munich Agreement signed (29th Sep.) German occupation of the Sudetenland End of the "Moscow Trials"

1939	Christopher Isherwood and W.H. Auden emigrate to the USA	Publication of Auden-Isherwood's *Journey to a War* Isherwood's *Goodbye to Berlin* Stephen Spender's *The Still Centre*	End of the Spanish Civil War Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact (or Treaty of Non-Aggression between Germany and the USSR (August) Start of the Second World War (September) *Criterion* stops publication
1940	Walter Benjamin's death	Publication of George Orwell's *Animal Farm* Arthur Koestler's *Darkness at Noon*	France's capitulation (June) Leon Trotsky's assassination in Mexico
1941	Virginia Woolf commits suicide Forster begins working for the BBC broadcasting to India	Publication of Arthur Koestler's *The Scum of the Earth*	
1942	Forster becomes President of the National Council for civil Liberties	Publication of Stephen Spender's *Ruins and Visions*	Douglas Cooper and Dennis Freeman publish in London *The Road to Bordeaux*
1944	Forster presides at London PEN (poets, playwrights, editors, essayists and novelists)		Nazis execute Missak Manouchian and other 22 of his resistance group
1945	Forster's mother death Forster visits India for the PEN Forster moves to Cambridge – honorary fellow at King's College	Publication of Christopher Isherwood's *Prater Violet*	End of World War Two - Germany surrenders Dresden bombing The Labour Party won the elections in the UK (Clement Attley) Atomic bombs dropped by the Americans in Hiroshima and Nagasaki Nuremberg Trials (1945-46) Partition of Germany

1946		Publication of Stephen Spender's *European Witness*	End of the League of Nations 1st General Assembly of the UNO Establishment of the UNESCO (UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation)
1947		Publication of George Orwell's *Animal Farm*	Indian Independence Act André Gide is awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature
1949	Tom Wintrigham's death Forster visits USA – lectures at Harvard (*The* 'raison d'être' *of criticism in art*)/meets Paul Cadmus	Publication of Christopher Isherwood's *The Condor and the Cows* (a travel book)	*The God that Failed* – a joint publication by André Gide, Ignasio Silone, Stephen Spender, Arthur Koestler, Richard Wright and Louis Fischer where they all expressed disillusion vis-à-vis communism
1951	André Gide's death	Publication of Forster's *Two Cheers for Democracy* Stephen Spender's *World within World*	
1952			European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC or CECA) came into existence
1953	Josef Stalin's death	Publication of Forster's *Hill of Devi*	Stephen Spender with journalist Irving Kristol found *Encounter* – an Anglo-American intellectual and cultural journal
1954		Publication of Christopher Isherwood's *The World in the Evening*	

1955			Publication of Aimé Césaire's *Discours sur le Colonialism* Louis Aragon's *Roman Inachevé – Strophes pour se Souvenir (L'affiche Rouge)*
1956		Publication of Forster's *Marianne Thornton*	Crisis of the Suez Hungarian rising
1958	Roger Martin du Gard's death		
1960			Trial of D.H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover*: found not guilty of obscenity
1961	Frantz Fanon's and Vanessa Bell's death		Patrice Lumumba's assassination in Congo Publication of Frantz Fanon's *Les damnés de la Terre*
1962		Publication of Christopher Isherwood's *Down There on a Visit*	
1963	W.H. Auden's death	Publication of Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class*	
1964	Clive Bell's death	Publication of Christopher Isherwood's *A Single Man* (considered his thoroughly American novel)	
1966	Rupert Doone's death		
1967	Joe Ackerley's death Stephen Spender resigns from *Encounter* and is replaced by Frank Kermode	Publication of Christopher Isherwood's *A Meeting by the River*	

1969	Leonard Woolf's and Erika Mann's death Forster is awarded the Order of Merit		
1970	Forster's death (in the home of May and Bob Buckingham) also of Bertrand Russell		
1971		Publication of Forster's *Maurice*, Christopher Isherwood's *Kathleen and Frank* and Stephen Spender's *The Generous Days* is	
1972	Cecil Day-Lewis's death Isherwood discloses his homosexuality for the 1st time and becomes active in the gay liberation movement	Publication of Forster's *The Life to Come*	Dramatization of Isherwood's *A Meeting by the River*, in Los Angeles
1973	W. H. Auden's death in Vienna		
1974		Publication of Stephen Spender's *Love and Hate Relations*	
1975			Christopher Isherwood's speech *Homosexuality and Literature* before the Modern Language association annual Convention
1976		Publication of Christopher Isherwood's *Christopher and his Kind*	
1978		Publication of Stephen Spender's *The Thirties and After*	Edward Said's *Orientalism* comes out

1980		Publication of Christopher Isherwood's *My Guru and his Disciple* and *Letters to Christopher: Stephen Spender's Letters to Christopher Isherwood*	
1986	Christopher Isherwood's death		
1988		Publication of Stephen Spender's *The Temple* (written in 1928)	
1991			*Encounter* closed *The Listener* ceased publication
1995	Stephen Spender's death		
2003	Kenneth Sinclair-Loutit's death		
2009	Edward Upward's death		

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L'art, c'est le plus court chemin
de l'homme à l'homme.
André Malraux

ANNEXES[97]

[97] Although the annexes included here are all published in print, they are sometimes difficult to find, therefore, we chose to include them in a way to facilitate the reading of the work as a whole.

Annexe 1

FORSTER, E.M., 2008. Nassenheide. In: J. M. Heath ed. 2008. *The Creator as Critic and Other Writings*. Toronto: Dundurn Press, pp. 206-211.

3. Liberace's piano horrid and his clothes touched as if they were the hem of Christ. Female teenagers — watch them if a chance offers. Take care they don't tear you to pieces.

[1950s]

Nassenheide

Nearly half a century ago — on the 4th of April 1905 to be precise — I went to stop with the Countess von Arnim. The three months I spent in her service led to little, certainly not to a knowledge of German, but in themselves they were interesting and rather beautiful. She was the distinguished novelist who wrote under the name of "Elizabeth" of the German Garden, and I was one of a series of tutors whom she engaged to teach her three elder girls, then widely and affectionately known as the April, May and June babies. At first I feared I should not get the post, since I met none of the Countess' requirements, refused to come to Pomerania permanently, could not give all my time, couldn't teach mathematics or anything except English and a little Italian, etc. But the more difficulties I raised the warmer grew her letters. She begged me to come when and as I liked, she trusted I shouldn't find it dull, and she asked me to be so good as to bring her a packet of orris-root. I made my way via Dresden and Berlin to Stettin, where there was a hitch as I could not pronounce the name of my next stage, Stöven. At Stöven it had grown dark, I became excited and fidgety at the thought of my welcome, and sought the support of the guard — it was a light railway by this time. At last we drew up in the middle of a farmyard. Heaps of manure, with water between them, could be seen in the light that fell from the carriage windows, but of my hostess not a sign. The guard shouted. There was no reply. Some regulation permitting him, he left the train, and presently re-emerged from the night with a farm-labourer who was to carry my bag and to show me where the castle was. Heavy luggage remained in the manure. We slipped and splashed through an atmosphere now charged with romance and in God's good time came to a long low building. The bell pealed, a hound bayed, and an underservant, only half dressed, opened the door at last and asked me what I wanted. I replied "I want to live here." The hall was white and vaulted and decorated with the heads of birds and small animals, and with mottoes in black paint. Presently the German tutor was awoken, Herr Steinweg, a large and cordial young man, who told me that I had not been expected so soon. He showed me my room, also my bed, but I could not enter the latter because it was occupied by a supernumerary English tutor. It was settled I must sleep in the nobler part of the house, in the best spare room itself. The cold was appalling in the best spare room, the wallpaper an excruciating green, the sound of a pump from the farm ceaseless and ghostly. Came the dawn. With it breakfast and all necessary courtesy from my colleagues. I was introduced to the French governess, and to the April and June babies — the May baby was away in Rome with the German governess — and presently I stood before the Countess herself.

The discomforts of my arrival had lowered me in her opinion: indeed I had lost all the ground I had gained. Glancing up at my tired and peaked face she said "How d'ye do Mr Forster. We confused you with one of the housemaids.... Can you teach the children, do you think? They are very difficult.... ah yes, Mr Forster, very difficult, they'll laugh at you, you know." I gave her the packet of orris-root, and the interview ended. She told me afterwards that she nearly sent me back to England there and then, also that I was wearing a particularly ugly tie. While disbelieving both these statements, I am aware that I came off as well as most young men. One of my successors she had actually engaged when she took a dislike to him and determined that he should not come. She therefore wrote pleasantly and told him not to write until he heard from her, since she was moving about and his letter might miss her. When she did write again it was to say that not hearing from him she concluded that the post did not suit him and that this terminated all correspondence. And there was a German tutor whom she appointed to come for an interview, but the day before he arrived the Great Voice of Nature called her, and she went off alone on a tour, leaving me and Steinweg to do what we could. Mine was therefore an average welcome.

During the month my position altered. In Dresden I had met some acquaintances of hers. "They don't like me," she said. I replied, "Yes, so I saw." The start she gave! I think it was genuine. She had discovered that her tutor had eyes. Also literary ability. Knowing that I "wrote" she took away an essay on Cardan in the *Independent Review* remarking, "I'm a very severe critic, I warn you. I'm merciless Mr Forster." She brought it back in a chastened mood saying, "You've simply to go on and win, I've no more to say." But though her respect was probably sincere she soon enlarged it into a new sort of bunkum — presented me to myself as a dark horse who saw and could do anything. Not only was she clever, but she had the power of making me accept her categories, and I wasted much time in wondering how dark I was. In my diary under April 16 I find an entry, "Have got it into my head that Gräfin thinks I write better than she does and is distressed by it. Anyhow, contact with her makes me more self-conscious, writhing round 'am I modest or no?' I think I do think little of myself, but then I think a great deal about it." And on April 23, "Suggested collaboration of Gräfin and self fallen through, with consent of both parties." The suggestion, which proceeded from her, appalled me. By no means did I want to cooperate with this particular elder sister: as of course she saw and duly implied. Proofs of my novel *Where Angels Fear to Tread* began to arrive soon, and I sat correcting them in my room while she sat typing her novel *The Princess Priscilla's Fortnight* in the summer house. She read my proofs and she hated the book because it spoke of underdone meat and spittle. "Pfui Mr Forster! Disgusting." I did not read *Priscilla* until it came out, nor ever went into the summer house but once. "Procul este Profani" was over its door. Firmly and quickly she typed a quatrain of Swinburne to show how a machine works. "I have looked deep into the hand of God" or something of the sort and a hard tight indestructible little spiritual existence seemed to bob up and down: hard, yet if ever I cracked it I should expect to find a spot of chocolate cream at the core. To be really liked, to be really liked, is probably her deepest aspiration, and when she brushes aside one's cleverness and exclaims, "But haven't you a heart?" it perhaps isn't tactics entire-

ly. May this explain her extraordinary power? It does seem odd that one should be so anxious to please such a person for she isn't distinguished and she's always ungrateful. Yet one is anxious, and she will have menials, unpaid and paid, to wait upon her until she dies. To want to be loved does pay.

The German Garden was even more surprising than its châtelaine. I couldn't find it. The house appeared to be surrounded with paddocks and shrubberies. Later on some flowers — mostly pansies — came into bloom, and there were endless lupins which the Count was drilling for agricultural purposes. Also rose trees in the little whirligig of laid out beds where we played "Wolf," salpiglossis, etc. But there was nothing of a show — only the lilac effected that, and the white flowering Faulbaum by which the dykes were edged. Nor did Elizabeth take any interest in the flowers. The "garden" merged into the "park" which was sylvan in tendency and consisted of small copses: "verboten" was over its gates, but the Count told me that the young couples from the village came in after dark, and that he did not object. There was also a field in the park, over whose long grass, at the end of July, a canopy of butterflies kept waving.

But it is the country that leaves the deep impression. At first the air was ugly, and came from the East. A few kingcups and a little palm were out, no leaves, the lanes and paths were of black sand, the sky lead. The chaussée, white and embanked, divided the desolate country. Cranes flew crying then ceased and shrieked. Over the immense plowed fields galloped the deer. Then the spring broke, slow, thematic, Teutonic. This and that started burgeoning, the birch trees forming the main melody. The light green foliage of the birch may be known to you, and so is Freia in *Das Rheingold*, but you cannot imagine the radiance that descended upon that flat iron-coloured land in May. The birches lined the dykes and strayed into the fields, mistletoe hung from them, some of them formed an islet in the midst of a field of rye, joined to the edge by a birchen isthmus. I would go to this islet on warm afternoons with my German grammar: at first the rye was low, later it hid the galloping deer. Herr Steinweg and I, both friendly to Nature, took many short walks. Sometimes we got into the pine woods: there was a tract fairly near that covered undulating ground and [where they] were not too regularly planted, and one evening the light flooded a gallery in them with golden beer upon whose substance a solitary leaf floated motionless. By chance I was full of beer also, and encountering the miraculous leaf thought it might be an illusion. But I pointed it out to Steinweg and he saw it too, which proves its objectivity. "I'll shoot you dead": thus spoke a little boy to me in this same pine wood and held out a toy pistol. Both the intonation and the sounds of Plattdeutsch are like English.

Steinweg and I had our rooms at the end of the long low annex that ran from the main building. I had a little room that got the morning sun, I could sit in my tin bath and be shone on. He had a larger room, where we breakfasted together. He had a passion for cleanliness, and would lift off the lid of the tea-pot to see if it was coated, as had once happened, with jam, and when he found anything wrong he would send it away by the servant, and complain to the German governess afterwards. It was also owing to him that our stoves generally worked and that ashes did not sift too often over our possessions. He was a solid and delightful companion, always cheerful and considerate, and most intelligent from the theological point of view. I can scarcely remember any hitches: it was a little annoying perhaps when he compelled me to save my money by buying a cigarette maker and some tissue-paper tubes, which tore. He loved art and

had a series of masterpieces, all the same size, and a wooden frame that was sold with them for their alternating exhibition. He loved poetry and would quote it in the twilight. He had a good sense of humour. He was only once shocked — when I let out that I believed telephone wires to be hollow: he could not imagine such a state of mind and he was silent and cold for a little afterwards. His position, his good temper and sense, his slight inclination to autocracy, made him the natural leader of us menials, and it is to him that we owed our tranquil summer, while the aristocratic section was plunged in worries and woe. Annoyed with him for some reason, the Countess said to me in digging tones: "Herr Steinweg's teasing you, Mr Forster, you know. You won't be able to call your soul your own." Or it may have been that she was annoyed with me. Or with neither of us. The church was his destination, Darwinianism his main study. "If the church of Berlin will not have me I shall enter the church of Lübeck." He was in great demand on Sundays among the country clergy, and preached one evening to jede lustige Mann and jede lustige Frau at Stolzenburg from a vast pulpit flanked by cherubs who covered their faces from him with wings of gold, balanced by an angel with an oyster shell who swung from the chancel ceiling, the roof blistering into more cherubs where it touched her chain. Here too was the pew of Herr Lenz, fenced in with a great enclosure like a refreshment room and empty except for six horsehair chairs. As a rule though, Steinweg preached not at Stolzenburg but at Blankensee, a simple edifice standing on a hill. I have passed many moderately happy hours in the Blankensee parsonage, listening or eating. "Lieber Herr Jesu sei unser Gast": and we fell to, with the exception of the beastly baby girl, Anna Maria, who had snatched what she wanted already. At the end of the meal the dining-room ceiling was again addressed in the same roguish tones and Jesus was thanked for having left us enough to eat. The Pastor and his wife were estimable people and when the Countess felt the need of something real and sterling in her life she would go to them for an afternoon and cool herself. Steinweg also admired them, but living, as he did, all of a piece he felt their narrowness and their inferiority to himself: he wondered whether when he married (as he has) and if he got a country parsonage (as he did) — whether he would sink to the intellectual and aesthetic level of Blankensee. I shall never know, because the year I thought of going to stop with him the war broke out. I got a letter through via Holland and received a reply: he said in it that one didn't really notice in Pomerania that there was a war and that he was certain of victory. Our intercourse ended on that note.

The third of our quartette was the French governess, Mademoiselle Auger de Balben, an awful old termagant to look at. But her nutcracker face, specs, grey locks, and rounded shoulders accompanied a childlike soul. I should not like her so much now, but then I thought her character wholly delightful. She was always busy making — I can't remember what: paper boxes inside which you found a filigree rabbit or a pig made out of shavings: that gives the idea. I still have the papier mâché snake that she gave me when I left, together with its inscription, "C'est le grand serpent Boa, quand il mord ceux qu'il mord sont morts" and her table in the school room where she sat as chaperone while I or Steinweg taught at the other table was littered with tiny secrets. She had no education: "If I had been educated I might have become a famous woman like Madame de Sévigné," she once remarked gaily. As for her literary judgments: "Alfred de Musset est un peu libre dans ses expressions et Paul de Kock aussi est très décolleté." The Count, the Countess, the children and all of us loved her. So did all animals, and like a character in a book she would catch them, catch wild animals

and birds outside the house, pet them for a little, and let them go. Yet she was not very happy. She had been with another family, of noble rank, who not only "loved" her but treated her with affectionate consideration that she did not find with us. She could walk, run, she was never self-conscious or shy.

Fräulein Backe or Teppi was less fortunately placed. The Countess had recently made her housekeeper as well as German governess and all through the summer she was bullied and worried and teased. A tall frog-faced maiden, it was her ambition to "live in art": she sang, when allowed, but so out of tune that the permission was seldom given, and she loved discussing operas, particularly Strauss's *Salome*. At times she essayed fantasy, appearing as an Easter Hare among piles of coloured eggs and giving at the Schiller centenary a comic performance of Der Alte Moor, which no one thought good. The Countess called her "Teppi" at all places and hours, the children leapt on her back, the Count stormed because she had not provided potatoes, Steinweg complained of our dirty rooms, the servants cheeked her. Dumb devotion bound her to the Countess: her other passion was for the Inspector of Forests, a large taciturn and rather handsome married man; she would become lyrical about the stillness and beauty of his life in the woods. In after years I met [her] again, on the Countess's caravan expedition through Kent. When life went amiss or even swiftly she would cry "Jammer Jammer Jammer."

And now for our supposed raison d'être, our pupils.

Of the five children I only handled the three eldest. I took them for an hour every day in English Composition or Greek History. They were intelligent and easy to manage, and their feeble attempts at naughtiness were crushed without trouble. I used to give them lists of words to spell out for five days and on the sixth a piece of dictation, of my own composition, in which the words were introduced; a good plan, and it excited and amused them. They also wrote Essays. The June baby was the most entertaining. Here is her Essay on "If there was a war between England and Germany, which would you want to win?" "If there was a war between England and Germany, I shouldn't care which won: I should run away as fast as I could": she showed this up with the passionate cry: "I know I shall get no marks because I have spoken the truth." She could be quaint and charming. Here are extracts from a longer Essay on the Fairchild Family [*blank*] and she could recite:

> No friend no comrade Lucy knew;
> She dwelt on a wide moor,
> The sweetest thing that ever grew
> Beside a Schumann door.

On the whole, my teaching was a success, "But Mr Gibb he climbed trees." Mr Gibb (son to the Director of the North Eastern Railway) got out of my bed the day after I came. The children wept and wept. Then they took [to] me and were extraordinarily nice, then they dropped me, and snubbed me when I made advances, and though they were always shifting the snubs had it on the whole. Lessons were all very well, but I must not presume to a personal relationship. The eldest, or April child, was specially critical, though her relapses into friendship were the more marked. I remember two. For a short period she would grip my hand hotly and a fixed maniacal expression would come into her face — she was about 13 or 14. The other occasion was at the end of my stay. When the servants handed round coffee after dinner they handed it to the Count and Countess and to their children, but not to the tutors and governesses. This was the fixed rule, and neither the children nor the Countess nor the Count had protested against it. But just before I was leaving the hostess awoke like a tiger in the April baby. She rushed at the servant, abused him violently for his impoliteness, sent him for extra coffee and cups and served us with her own hands. I don't quite understand this.

[1954?]

Annexe 2

FREEMAN, D. C. and COOPER, D., 1942. *The Road to Bordeaux*. London: Readers Union Ltd. and the Cresset Press.

TO THOSE WHOM WE LEFT BEHIND

You must forgive this personal record written without your consent or knowledge. To apologise for writing a book about you is absurd, but to have written it without apologising would also be absurd. We did not enlist in the French Army for the sake of writing our memoirs. It was never our intention to use you, or the events of the tragic month of June, 1940, which we endured together, for our own gain. But we have been impelled by circumstances to tell our story. It was in Plymouth that the thought first came to us, when we realised that grave injustice was being done to the French people and to the French Army. So many were being made to pay for the faults of so few. Nobody more than our small Section had experience of the fortitude of the French soldier and of the tragic bewilderment of the French people. We, two Englishmen in that awful rout, felt that it was our duty to recount what we had seen and heard. Many of the incidents we have recorded will seem petty, but it was only with them that a complete picture could be built. What is important is not the detail of our daily existence but the sequence of greater events into which it fits. Some of your names have been changed : you will understand the reasons. We have had no news of you since we left : some of you are prisoners, some are lost, all of you are certainly less fortunate than ourselves. But wherever you are, we know that each one of you will not give up the fight until France is again free. Perhaps, then, after the victory, we may meet again in the same beautiful Paris where we first met.

Annexe 3

SHAHEEN, M., 2004. *E.M. Forster and the Politics of Imperialism*. New York: Palgrave-MacMillan, pp.171-183.

The Government of Egypt

By a Committee of the International Section of

THE LABOUR RESEARCH DEPARTMENT...

The following pamphlet has been written for the Labour Research Department by Mr E. M. Forster. It states the historical, social, and political conditions of the problem which confront the Empire and Labour in Egypt.

Egypt

By E. M. Forster

Note

The following notes attempt to state facts rather than a case. A few of them are the result of personal experience: I was in Egypt from November, 1915, to January, 1919, though not under conditions that were favourable for observation. The bulk of them are compiled from such textbooks of Imperialism as Cromer's 'Modern Egypt' and Milner's 'England in Egypt'; from the Nationalist manifesto issued by Zagloul and his supporters in January 1919; and from the columns of English and Egyptian papers. I have seldom drawn any conclusions, leaving such a task to those who are better qualified, nor am I responsible for the recommendations set forth in the Introduction.[1]

Before the War

The present troubles have so many of their roots in the past that a brief historical retrospect is necessary.

Dynasty of Mohammed Ali

In the 16th century Egypt was conquered by the Turks. Early in the 19th century, Mohammed Ali, an Albanian adventurer, established himself, nominally as a Turkish vassal, and founded the present dynasty. From about 1840–80 Egypt was practically independent. The relations between her and her suzerain were finally thus adjusted (1873 and 1879): The Ruler – entitled 'Khedive' – promised to pay Turkey an annual tribute, to limit his military expenditure in peace time, and to observe any treaties that Turkey might sign; but he was in other ways absolute, not only in Egypt, but in the district

(then ill-defined) of the Soudan. The Khedives established the cultivation of cotton and introduced some of the superficialities of Western civilization. But they were Oriental despots at heart, and oppressed the peasants and agricultural labourers, who form the great majority of the population.

Growth of foreign influence

Napoleon's expedition had drawn the attention of Europeans to Egypt, and as soon as Mohammed Ali was established they flocked to the country to make money, and extorted through their Consuls various concessions from its rulers. Since Egypt was nominally part of Turkey they profited by the 'Capitulations': that is by agreements which their several Governments had concluded at one time and another with that country. They had, and still have, scarcely any duties to the land where they claim so many rights. The chief instance of their enterprise is the Suez Canal, which was constructed 1859–69 by a French company, and which, however valuable internationally, was destined to do Egypt more harm than good and to accelerate her bankruptcy. The bad finance of the Khedive Ismail put Egypt under the thumb of her foreign creditors, and led to dual control by France and England, the two Powers most interested, and finally (1879) to the deposition of Ismail through the concerted action of all the European Powers. The glory of the dynasty was now over.

Birth of the Nationalist Party

Just as the foreign menace was taking shape the Nationalist Party arose. It began in the army, where it was directed against the employment of Turkish officers, but soon spread to politics and adopted wider ideals. The leader, Arabi, effected a *coup d'etat* (1881) by which he induced the new Khedive to grant a constitution and to support a movement for emancipating Egypt from foreign control in politics and finance. In 1882 Arabi became Minister of War, and the Khedive, alarmed at his popularity, changed sides and sought protection from the French and English. Alexandria always a European stronghold, gave the signal for the upheaval. There was an anti-foreign riot there, and the British fleet, after waiting a month, bombarded the city and produced a second riot. The French, while approving British action, did not participate in it, and the destruction of the Nationalists was entirely effected by our troops. Arabi's army was defeated at Tel el-Kebir and he was exiled. Thus perished a movement which if treated sympathetically, might have set Egypt upon the path of constitutional liberty.

The British occupation

While declaring that they had been compelled to intervene,[2] Mr Gladstone's Government disclaimed all intention of establishing a Protectorate. Much turns upon this disclaimer. It was worded as follows in the dispatch of Lord Granville, British Foreign Secretary (addressed to the Powers on January 3rd, 1883):–

> Although for the present a British force remains in Egypt for the preservation of public tranquility, Her Majesty's Government are desirous of withdrawing it as soon as the state of the country and the organization of proper means for the maintenance of the Khedive's authority will admit of it. In the meantime, the position in which Her Majesty's Government are placed towards His Highness imposes upon them the duty of giving advice with the object of securing that the order of things to be established shall be of a satisfactory character, and possess the elements of stability and progress.

It is to the second of these two sentences that we appeal in extenuation of our continued occupation. We assert that it has been necessary for us to 'advise' Egypt from 1883 to the present moment, and to enforce at times her adoption of our advice by dismissing her Ministers and the Governors of her provinces. In 1887 we did, indeed, offer to withdraw. But negotiations on the subject with her suzerain Turkey broke down, nor would withdrawal have meant renunciation, since we were to retain the right of re-entry. Our position was at first insecure, owing partly to the loss of the Soudan (1883) and partly to the jealousy of France. It was consolidated by the talents of our Agent, Lord Cromer. (For the position of the British Agent, or, to give him his present title, the High Commissioner.) Cromer (1883–1907) was primarily a financier. He pleased foreign creditors by rendering irrigation and abolished the lash and the forced labour (corvee) that the peasantry were annually compelled to give upon the canals. But he had a profound distrust of Orientals; his sympathy with Nationalism was purely academic; he started the flood of British officials who now deluge the administration,* and his aim was a contented but torpid Egypt who would never criticize the Occupying Power. His rule ended in two great triumphs for British policy – the reconquest of the Soudan (1898), which was henceforward administered as a British possession, and the Anglo-French Agreement (1904), by which France abandoned her Egyptian aspirations and left us a free hand. But the Nationalist Party was reforming, and after Cromer's retirement we so far yielded to protests as to permit the formation of a Legislative Assembly (1913), which, though almost debarred from legislation, was at all events a channel for public opinion. The Assembly met only once, for next year war broke out between Great Britain and Turkey. The Army of Occupation – hitherto fixed at about 6,000 – was at once increased to unknown dimensions, and a new chapter begins.

During the War

Proclamation of the Protectorate

Since Egypt was still technically a vassal of Turkey, the outbreak of the war placed her in an anomalous position. We dealt with it by putting the country

* The figures are 286 in 1896; 662 in 1906; 1,671 in 1919. Some of the officials have served previously in India; such may be useful for their administrative qualities, but they, and still more their women-folk, introduce a racial arrogance from which the regular Anglo-Egyptian officials are free.

under martial law, by proclaiming a British Protectorate, and by setting up a member of the house of Mohammed Ali with the title of 'Sultan' in place of the ex-Khedive Abbas, who had deserted to our enemies. The proclamation was moderately worded. It recognized that Egyptians could not be expected to fight against their fellow Mohammedans and late over-lords, nor to bear the expenses of a war that they never sought; it promised them protection, and in return only asked them not to hinder our military activities. The mass of the people took no notice of this ominous document; the educated minority regarded it as a temporary measure, and Rushdi Pasha, the Prime Minister, was (he states) promised that if the country kept quiet during the war substantial concessions awaited it. Egypt fulfilled her side of the bargain. Our troops, and in particular the British Tommies, were well received, and though the Colonials (who ought never to be quartered amongst friendly Oriental peoples) rioted in Cairo and elsewhere, and regarded the natives as 'blacks', their misbehaviour did not discredit the Expeditionary Force as a whole. I have walked alone, both in the native quarters of towns and in the country, and always met courtesy and kindness, and I have entered without difficulty mosques that were supposed to be fanatic. The mild and cheerful Egyptians seemed (especially to one who had known Indians) an easy people to live with. But evil influences were at work.

The censorship

The fortunes of war connected Egypt with the Gallipoli campaign, the operations against the Senussi, and the Sinai and Palestine campaigns; while thousands of troops and sick passed through in connection with the Mesopotamia and Salonica campaigns. A military censorship was therefore imperative, but the Army authorities, according to their universal habit, diverted it to non-military purposes, and used it to suppress public opinion. All the local papers (Arabic, English, French, Italian, Greek) were censored under instructions that were of more than average stupidity. The most unexpected subjects were prohibited: for example Lord Lansdowne's letter about peace, the Maud Allan case, the friction between Italy and the Jugo-Slavs, and – crowning absurdity! – the censorship itself. Though the papers frequently appeared with blank columns, they were forbidden to allude to the censor's existence. Foreign newspapers, except English and French, were also censored, as of course were letters and telegrams. The remaining outlet for public opinion, the Legislative Assembly, was not allowed to meet. The total result of these suppressions was disastrous: not only were the natives irritated, but they believed that we had been defeated, not merely in Gallipoli but all over the world, and dared no longer tell the truth.

Conscription and commandeering

As the war progressed, Egypt, despite our promises, was dragged into it. We did not honour her like the Indian Native States, and gratefully accept her help; we took it furtively. Though scarcely using the Egyptian army (a force

about 17,000 strong), we enrolled for various purposes natives to the estimated number of 1,000,000, that is one-thirteenth of the total population. Many of these formed an Egyptian Labour Corps; others were employed as packers in the Army Service Corps, clerks, etc. Enlistment was popular at first, for it was voluntary and the pay good. But as the supply of recruits for the Labour Corps flagged, compulsion was secretly introduced. Grave abuses resulted. The country districts, where public opinion could least express itself, suffered most; so many men were required from each province, the province apportioned the requisition among the districts, these among the villages, and the village-headman sent those men who were his enemies or who had not bribed him sufficiently. The system was extended to the towns as our needs grew, until by the time of the armistice only Cairo and Alexandria were exempt. The Labour Corps was at first employed in Egypt only, but afterwards in Palestine and Syria, and even in France, sometimes working under fire. Hospital accommodation was disgraceful, and the mortality, especially from typhus, very high: no statistics have been published by the military authorities.

We also commandeered food, fodder, animals, often paying tardily and inadequately. Before the war was over the countryside had experienced, under British auspices, many of the exactions of an Oriental despotism; and as prices rose and pneumonic influenza took its toll, the misery and discontent increased. The general originally in command (Maxwell) knew Egypt and kept in touch with public opinion, and had he remained much trouble would have been averted. Unfortunately, he was superseded for military reasons, and under his successors all criticism was silenced. Many Anglo-Egyptian officials, though anything but sentimental about the natives, foresaw that disaster was ahead, but were unable to make their advice heard.

After the War

We broke promises and made mistakes both before and during the war, but the seeds of revolution were not sown until after the Armistice had been signed with Turkey. The Egyptians who had acquiesced in our Protectorate as an exceptional measure, now hoped to regularize the situation, but found that martial law was sterner than ever and that they were treated as members of a subject race. They were the more amazed because President Wilson had proclaimed, and Great Britain had adhered to, the principle of self-determination; and even before the Turkish Armistice (it was when Bulgaria collapsed) I saw a small crowd of uneducated natives standing outside the American Consulate at Alexandria expecting the Consul to announce the independence of their country![3] Egypt was refused representation on the Paris Peace Conference, although the newly created and more primitive Kingdom of the Hedjaz sent its envoy. The Prime Minister, Rushdi Pasha, tried at least to go to London to confer with the Foreign Office, but the Foreign Office replied that it was too busy to think about Egypt yet. In consequence the Ministry resigned, and as no one would take office in its place, the country was left for nearly six months without legal government. The papers were

prevented by the censorship from alluding to the crisis, but news of it spread orally. During the winter of 1918–19 the natives, including the peasantry, became definitely anti-British: I noticed the change.

The Zagloul Delegation

Saad Zagloul Pasha was Minister of Education (1906) under Cromer, and is a politician of the highest repute. He is Chancellor of the Egyptian University at Cairo. On the failure of Rushdi, he formed a Delegation of Nationalists to the Peace Conference. Passports were refused on the ground that the Delegation had no mandate, and that the Legislative Assembly, of which Zagloul was the elected Vice-President, was a non-existent body. Zagloul and three of his colleagues were then deported to Malta (March 1919), and this precipitated the rebellion. After a few days the delegates were released and allowed to go to Paris, and other colleagues from Egypt were allowed to join them. They remained there over a year, trying in vain for a hearing. Their programme is summarized below. Whatever their mandate may be technically, they represent Egypt in fact, and apparently this has at last been realized by the British Government, for at the time of writing (June 1920) Zagloul has come officially to London.

The rebellion

As soon as Zagloul's internment was known, the country rose, communications were cut, British were besieged in Assiout, British officers were murdered in a train south of Cairo. Our reprisals were, according to the Egyptians, needlessly severe, whole villages being wiped out. Atrocities and reprisals are inherent parts of the supreme atrocity of war, and nothing is gained by speculating which side committed most, nor is it helpful to dwell on the hastily conducted courts-martial that ensued, nor upon the wild search for arms in which the non-Moslem Indian troops that we employed committed many irregularities. The important point is that every Egyptian sympathized openly or secretly with the rising, and that it was national, not religious – Copts (native Egyptian Christians) took part in it and were also represented in the Zagloul Delegation. The General commanding our forces (Allenby) kept his head, whatever his subordinates may have done. He released the Zagloulists; dismissed the most unpopular British official in the Government (the Adviser to the Ministry of Education); induced Sa'd Pasha, a discredited politician, to form a Ministry; and (July) transferred trials arising out of the rebellion from the courts-martial to the civil tribunals, and abolished the censorship of the Press – two concessions that have been indeed more apparent than real, since the courts-martial had already imprisoned innocent Egyptians who were not released, while, as for the Press, a tight hold was kept over it by suspensions and fines, and the Censorship was reimposed wherever it was deemed expedient. The country became quieter and disturbances did not recommence till September, since when they have been continuous. Allenby tries to keep the British Army in the background, and to leave the suppression of rioting to

the native police. But the police sympathise with the rioters, so our troops have to be employed in the end. The students are generally on strike, and not only discipline in the schools but every detail in the curriculum is arranged and enforced by martial law. Industrial strikes – hitherto unknown – are also frequent, and since most of the employers of labour (e.g., the water and the tram companies at Alexandria) are foreign, the workers combine a political protest with an economic. The military authorities have taken a serious view of the labour troubles. Schemes for a general strike have so far failed.

These later disturbances are connected with the Milner Mission.

The Milner Mission

In May, 1919, Lord Curzon announced that a Mission would be sent under Lord Milner to Egypt for two purposes: to enquire into the causes of the March rebellion and to grant a constitution under the Protectorate. Egyptians assumed that it was sent mainly for the first purpose, and that any reforms it granted would be inadequate. Moderate Nationalists as well as extreme Zagloulists were against it. Had it gone at once it might have won a hearing, but with incredible negligence it did not sail till December. The British Government was again too busy to attend to Egypt.

The composition of the Mission naturally inspired distrust. Milner himself was known as a militant Imperialist, who sincerely believed that the world would be happier if it were ruled by the British upper-middle classes. He had been in Egypt before, first as a journalist, then (1889–92) as Under-Secretary for Finance. His original attitude towards the people he proposed to pacify is best indicated by a quotation from his book:–

> If any man desires to help Egypt forward on the road of independence, the worst and most short-sighted thing he can possibly do is to resist the introduction of English control into any department of the Government. – 'England in Egypt', p. 287

The other members of the Mission were: General Maxwell, who knows Egypt well, and whose attitude is supposed to be sympathetic; Sir Rennell Rodd, formerly British Ambassador at Rome; General Thomas, an authority on tropical agriculture; Mr J. A. Spender, Editor of the 'Westminister Gazette'; Mr C. J. B. Hurst, Assistant Legal Adviser to the Foreign Office; with Mr A. T. Loyd as secretary and Mr E. M. B. Ingram as assistant secretary and private secretary to Lord Milner.

The Mission spent several months in Egypt, encircled by machine-guns and aircraft. The threatened boycott succeeded, and, with the exception of the European communities, no section of society consented to give evidence officially. The Report of the Mission has not yet (June 1920) been issued, but there is reason to believe that it will be conciliatory in tone and possibly on lines that the Nationalists can accept. Zagloul would scarcely have come to England unless he had hopes of a satisfactory settlement.

The Egyptian administration

Egypt is at present under martial law, but the following notes upon her civil government may be useful:–

The Sultan

Called, under the Turkish connection, the 'Khedive'. The present Sultan, Fouad, is a man of no influence, commonplace in appearance, Italian by education, without following in the country. Though our puppet, he is scarcely pro-English, because his pride has been hurt by our recognition of the King of the Hedjaz. The princes of his house, including the wealthy and able Prince Toussoum, have issued an important declaration in favour of Nationalism. The Nationalists, on their side, have not defined their attitude towards the Dynasty, but, although its record has been indifferent and there is no Egyptian blood in its veins, it is likely to survive. At all events, there is no possibility of loyalty to King George, as there is in India.

The ministry

The Sultan is supposed to rule through his Cabinet of native Ministers, who are responsible to him. There are normally seven Portfolios: Education; Public Works and War; Interior; Finance; Justice; Agriculture; Wakfs, that is charitable foundations and bequests; and to these has been added (1919) a Ministry of Communications, that is, Railways, Post Office, and Telephones. Inside most of the Ministries is an 'Adviser', a permanent British official, and one of these, the Financial Adviser, has a seat without a vote in the Cabinet itself. The Financial Adviser is indeed the corner stone of our power inside the Egyptian administration. No financial decision can be taken without his consent, and, since little can be done without spending money, this ensures him a veto upon all important measures.

The High Commissioner

Called, previous to the Protectorate, 'Agent' or Consul-General. Appointed by our Foreign Office, and in theory our only diplomatic representative to the Egyptian Government. He became, with Cromer, the means by which we control that Government from the outside. He gives 'advice' to the native Ministers and Governors on all important points, which they must carry out or forfeit their posts; he is in touch with the Advisers and other British officials who are inside the Egyptian administration and nominally servants of the Sultan. During the war the High Commissioner, despite his access of title, lost importance. At present he has been superseded by General Allenby, with title of 'Special High Commissioner'. The triumph of militarism over all forms of civilian government has been complete.

The Legislative Assembly

Created 1913, suppressed 1914. Will probably be important in the future. It is by law composed of (i) the Ministers; (ii) 66 members returned by indirect suffrage: they are chosen by elector-delegates, each of whom are chosen by 50 electors; (iii) 17 members nominated by the Government to represent minorities. Its powers were slight. It could initiate Legislation, but the Government was not bound by its resolution, and could enact laws over its head. It had no power over the Executive except in restraint of any increase of direct taxation. Despite its name, it was mainly a deliberate and consultative body, and certain subjects, for example the foreign relations of Egypt, it was not even allowed to discuss. Nevertheless, it represented an important constitutional departure, because it could voice the opinion of the Egyptian people and question and criticize the Government. The Nationalists demand its convocation; and one of Zagloul's claims to be heard is that he is its elected Vice-President. It has become the symbol of Liberty, just as the Protectorate is the symbol of Tyranny.

Special problems

The Egyptian question is complicated by three special problems:

The European communities and the Capitulations

The foreign residents are not important numerically – only 56,000 Greeks, 40,000 Italians, 24,000 British, and 21,000 French, out of a total population of 13 millions. But most of the business, banking, and industrial enterprise is in their hands, and their presence raises many difficulties. At the worst they include some unmitigated scoundrels, at the best they contain men of character and culture whom it is a privilege to have known; but in all cases they are aliens in Egypt and have come to exploit it; they despise Oriental ways, they are agnostics or Christians who have no sympathy for Islam, and they feel for the natives a fear that too often proceeds from a bad conscience. Their relations with the Occupying Power of Great Britain vary rapidly and depend partly on local, partly on European conditions. Previous to the Anglo-French Agreement (1904), the French were hostile, and they are still jealous; during the war we had to control the Royalist section of the Greeks; since the armistice the Italians have tried to embarrass us. But at bottom their interests and those of British Imperialism are the same. They dread a strong native government.

Under the Capitulations, Europeans have special privileges which they can appeal to their respective Powers to enforce; (a) They are exempt from the jurisdiction of the Native Courts. In criminal cases they are tried by their own country for trial. In civil cases they go before the Mixed Tribunals (established 1876), which consist of Courts of First Instance and of a Court of Appeal, and which are composed of foreign and of native judges, the foreign element

predominating; (b) They are immune from taxation – excepting customs duty and land tax; (c) They have immunity of domicile. Now that the Turkish connection has ended, the Capitulations are an anachronism, and a committee has been sitting in secret to codify the law with a view of replacing them. The Nationalists, however, wish to retain them. This was not always their policy; but regarding Great Britain as their main enemy they are now conciliatory elsewhere, and some of them, despairing of complete independence, have even wanted to restore the system of Dual Control, in the hope of playing off England against France. The Zagloulists promise to retain the Mixed Courts and to impose no legislation or taxation upon foreigners that is not sanctioned by the general assemblies of the Mixed Court of Appeal.

The Suez Canal

The canal was made (1859–69) by a French company. In 1888 it was neutralized: it was to be open both in peace and war to all ships, whether belligerents or neutrals, and no hostilities were to be committed in or near it. Its neutralization was ignored by both Turks and English in the late war. From the Egyptian point of view the canal is a misfortune for it provides foreigners with a permanent excuse for interfering. The Egyptian Government originally sunk over 16 million pounds in it, but in 1875 sold its shares to Great Britain. We paid four million for them, but they are now immensely valuble: as long ago as 1892 their value had quintupled. It is of little advantage to Egyptian trade, for it chiefly serves as through passage between Europe and India, etc.

The Zagloulists make no serious claim on the Canal, and would accept 'whatever measures the Peace Conference may take to secure its neutrality'. It may be assumed that whatever happens Great Britain will remain in control, so that even if Egypt does gain independence, she will always be a weak state, incapable of damaging us as long as we remain a naval power.

The Soudan

The Soudan (population about three millions) is at present governed in accordance with the Convention made between the British and Egyptian Governments in 1899, after its reconquest from the Mahdists. Both the British and Egyptian flags are flown, but the administration is practically British and untrammeled by international complications. The Governor-General and the governors of the 16 provinces are British. Administration is carried on by British inspectors, under whom are district officials – usually Egyptians. There is no Legislative Assembly, laws being made by the Governor-General in Council. The people are a backward race, recently delivered from barbarism. They have no national movement, no Europeanized class; the Gordon College at Khartoum is scarcely above the level of a primary school. There is a wide gulf intellectually between them and their British rulers, and, as often happens in such cases, comparative harmony. Englishmen who have governed both invariably prefer the Soudanese to the Egyptian, just as in India they prefer the half-savage Pathan to the civilized Bengali.

The Nationalists claim the Soudan. Main arguments: (a) The Soudan has often been conquered and held by Egypt in the past; (b) Financial. The country not being self-supporting, Egypt has to supply the deficit, which exceeded three million pounds during the first five years after the reconquest. Some of the objects to which the money has been applied are against Egyptian interests: for example one million went to the construction of Port Soudan on the Red Sea and provided an alternative outlet for Soudanese trade. It is true that, as a set-off, Egypt sends her goods into the Soudan duty free and also collects customs on goods intended for the Soudan. But her net loss since the reconquest is estimated by the Nationalists at 11 million, and they argue that she ought to be allowed to govern what she pays for; (c) The Soudan controls the Nile water supply and consequently the fertility and the very existence of Egypt. Great irrigation works are contemplated on the Blue and the White Nile – the two branches that unite to form the main stream at Khartoum. When the dams are finished it would be possible for a hostile Soudan to withhold from Egypt her share of water, or even to loose devastating floods.

On the other hand: Despite a common religion and language and a certain affinity of blood, the two races are antipathetic. No doubt the antipathy has been exaggerated by the British, just as they exaggerate the differences between the various races of India, but it certainly exists. The Egyptian regards the Soudanese as a 'black', while the Soudanese despises the Egyptian's body and fears his mind. The Soudanese notables who visited England in 1919 were at pains to dissociate themselves from Egyptian Nationalism. If the country were handed over at its present state of development to a Nationalist Egypt, trouble would certainly ensue. British control must be maintained until the Soudanese are capable of expressing their own wishes – whether for union with Egypt or for independence – and a rudimentary political organization should be introduced to train them for this purpose. Egypt should relinquish her present nominal share in the administration, but should have representatives to protect her interests in any irrigation schemes.

The religious factor

Although religion is still a greater force in the East than in Europe, the present disturbances are anti-British, not anti-Christian. Copts have sided with Mohammedans, e.g., in March 1919, Nationalist flags displayed the Crescent and the Cross together. The Mohammedans of Egypt – unlike those of India – evince little interest in the future of the Caliphate and of Constantinople. Rationalism is common among the educated. Even women have taken part in politics, contrary to Islamic precedent; there are processions of ladies in Cairo, and Madame Zagloul has addressed a deputation from behind a screen. It would seem that in Egypt, as in Europe, religion and tradition are dying forces in public affairs.

The chief religious center is the Mosque of El Azhar at Cairo, a famous Islamic university (7,000 to 9,000 students). It is connected with subordinate institutions, for example with the Mosque at Tanta, the main stronghold of

fanaticism. Anti-British propaganda went on in the mosques, but there was no official pronouncement until December 1919, when British soldiers violated the sanctity of El Azhar. The University authorities then called upon Great Britain 'to redeem her pledges and to recognize the complete independence of a country which is distinguished by a glorious heritage and by a peculiar position of predominance in all the East'. This important manifesto stiffened opposition to the Milner mission, but did not transform the opposition into a Holy War.

The Egyptian character

Up to 1919 the Egyptians were allowed such plebeian virtues as industry and good temper, but they were regarded as an inferior race, incapable of taking the initiative or of suffering for an ideal. This low estimate of them was not confined to Europeans; it was shared by their co-religionists in Turkey and in India. But hatred of the British has hardened the national character. The official view of this change is that it is due to propaganda. But propaganda is not a magic drug: it must appeal to something that already exists in men's minds, or its power evaporates. We have seen what genuine grievances all classes of the Egyptians have against us, and Zagloul and other politicians have only voiced the wrongs of the illiterate* and humble, and by voicing them have elicited a response. Writing of the revolt of 1882, Milner says, 'It is the strongest proof of the intensity of the old misgovernment that a revolution ... should have been possible among a population so easy-going and so submissive'; and it is the strongest proof of our misgovernment today. Though a large British army was in the country, the rising was planned so silently that just before its outbreak the Adviser to the Ministry of the Interior (he has since departed) announced that all was peaceful; and it was executed with a skill that has won praise from its military opponents. The people that risked so much for their liberty can never be called inferior again. Whether their patriotism has a constructive side we cannot tell until we give it a chance: at present it necessarily takes the form of rioting.

Conclusion

The following lines of solution may be considered:–

(i) The Zagloulists, in their Memorandum of 25th January, 1919, ask for complete independence, to be guaranteed by the League of Nations, and also for the restoration to Egypt of the Soudan; they promise to safeguard foreign interests by retaining the Capitulations and they make no claim on the Canal. No British Government is likely to accept this solution.

(ii) Mandate to Great Britain from the League of Nations. Would the mandate be honestly applied in the spirit of the Covenant of the League – that is

* Over 90 per cent of the population is illiterate.

would the 'advice' tendered to the Egyptians by Great Britain really be advice, and not a command as it has been in the past? In other words, would the Egyptians be allowed to manage their own affairs? If they were, this solution would not be inconsistent with the British professions or Egyptian demands, though, of course, it could not be as thoroughgoing as (i).

(iii) Retention of the Protectorate, together with reforms that would have seemed revolutionary a few years ago – for example a restoration of the Legislative Assembly with greatly increased powers, and a diminution in the number of British officials. No Egyptian would accept such a solution.

(iv) Could we not return to the conditions of 1881, develop the constitution that Arabi then extracted from the Khedive, and restore the nominal connection with Turkey? This solution does not seem practicable. The Egyptians today – except for a few of the upper classes who boast Turkish blood – dislike the Turks, nor have they much attachment to the Caliphate. To withdraw the British connection and restore the Turkish would be to substitute one problem for another.

Annexe 4

WOOLF, L., 1925. Letter 46 [Personal letter to E. M. Forster]. In: P. Jeffrey ed. 2009. *The Forster-Cavafy Letters – Friends at a Slight Angle*. Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press.

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THE HOGARTH PRESS[105]
52 Tavistock Square, London W.C.1.
Telephone: Museum 3488

C. P. Cavafy Esq
10 rue Lepsius
Alexandria

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1 September, 1925

Dear Mr Cavafy,

I have been speaking again with Mr E. M. Forster about an edition of your poems. I have also seen the translations by Mr Valassapoulo [sic] and read them with the greatest admiration. I am now writing to urge you very strongly to allow us to publish these translations in a volume which we will have printed for us. We would offer you a royalty of 10% on the published price or, if you preferred it, one-third of any profits made from the publication, and in any case we would pay an advance of £10 on the day of publication.

I hope that you will consider this proposal favourably.

Yours very truly
Leonard Woolf

Annexe 5

WOOLF, L., 1946. Letter 82 [Personal letter to E. M. Forster]. In: P. Jeffrey ed. 2009. *The Forster-Cavafy Letters – Friends at a Slight Angle*. Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press.

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20/11/46

The Hogarth Press
40-42 William IV Street

Dear Morgan,

I have just had one of the great triumphs of my life. I have received from Singopoulo a signed agreement giving me the right to publish Cavafy in Mavro's translation. I shall do it complete. The triumph would be complete if you would write an introduction to it.[195] Would you?

Yours,
Leonard Woolf

Annexe 6

PROUST, M., 1965. *Choix de Lettres*. Paris: Plon.

[Around September 1898]

My dear little Madame Strauss:

M. [Anatole] France, at the request of M. Labori, would like a few well-known personalities to sign an address to Picquart, M. Labori feeling that this might impress the judges. They would like some new names for this. I promised M. France to write to you to ask you to reach out to M. d?Haussonville, who you can tell that it's on M. France's behalf. The address will purposely be conceived in terms so moderate that it will in no way commit the signatories concerning the Dreyfus Affair itself. And M. d?Haussonville, who has so much heart, such an elevated spirit, will perhaps not refuse you this, and like everyone else M. France feels that his name – which is in every way without peer – will have enormous importance for the future, not of the Affair, but of Picquart, which appears to be far darker. I speak of his future, for he is possessed of a serenity that elicits tender words from France, who is usually so detached. But if M. d?Haussonville is too much too hope for, if you don't succeed or don't wish to attempt it, you can fall back on Dufeuille, Ganderax or any distinguished person you know; on Pozzi, on whoever you can without taking too much trouble. But this trouble will be a pleasure for you, "for you are beautiful and he is unhappy." But this must be done quickly.

I would have written to M. d?Haussonville myself, but since I hardly know him I?m afraid I would appear ridiculous and, more seriously, ineffective. I haven't seen you since the Affair, once so Balzacian (Bertulus the investigating magistrate of *Splendeur et Misère des Courtisanes*; Christian Esterhazy, the provincial nephew of *Illusions Perdues*; du Paty du Clam the Rastignac who set up a meeting with Vautrin in the distant faubourgs) has become Shakespearean with the accumulation of its rapid denouements.

But let's not skim over this subject which we?ll talk about in Trouville, where I hope we?ll see mama heal, which has just about happened.

Your respectful,

Marcel

Speak only to the possible signatories of the address to Picquart so word of it doesn't get out.

Annexe 7

ARAGON, L., 2004. *Roman Inachevé*. London: Palgrave-McMillan.

Strophes pour se souvenir

Vous n'avez réclamé la gloire ni les larmes
Ni l'orgue ni la prière aux agonisants
Onze ans déjà que cela passe vite onze ans
Vous vous étiez servi simplement de vos armes
La mort n'éblouit pas les yeux des Partisans

Vous aviez vos portraits sur les murs de nos villes
Noirs de barbe et de nuit hirsutes menaçants
L'affiche qui semblait une tache de sang
Parce qu'à prononcer vos noms sont difficiles
Y cherchait un effet de peur sur les passants

Nul ne semblait vous voir français de préférence
Les gens allaient sans yeux pour vous le jour durant
Mais à l'heure du couvre-feu des doigts errants
Avaient écrit sous vos photos MORTS POUR LA France
Et les mornes matins en étaient différents

Tout avait la couleur uniforme du givre
À la fin février pour vos derniers moments
Et c'est alors que l'un de vous dit calmement
Bonheur à tous Bonheur à ceux qui vont survivre
Je meurs sans haine en moi pour le peuple allemand

Adieu la peine et le plaisir Adieu les roses
Adieu la vie adieu la lumière et le vent
Marie-toi sois heureuse et pense à moi souvent
Toi qui vas demeurer dans la beauté des choses
Quand tout sera fini plus tard en Erivan

Un grand soleil d'hiver éclaire la colline
Que la nature est belle et que le coeur me fend
La justice viendra sur nos pas triomphants
Ma Mélinée ô mon amour mon orpheline
Et je te dis de vivre et d'avoir un enfant

Ils étaient vingt et trois quand les fusils fleurirent
Vingt et trois qui donnaient leur coeur avant le temps
Vingt et trois étrangers et nos frères pourtant
Vingt et trois amoureux de vivre à en mourir
Vingt et trois qui criaient la France en s'abattant.

Louis Aragon, Le Roman Inachevé